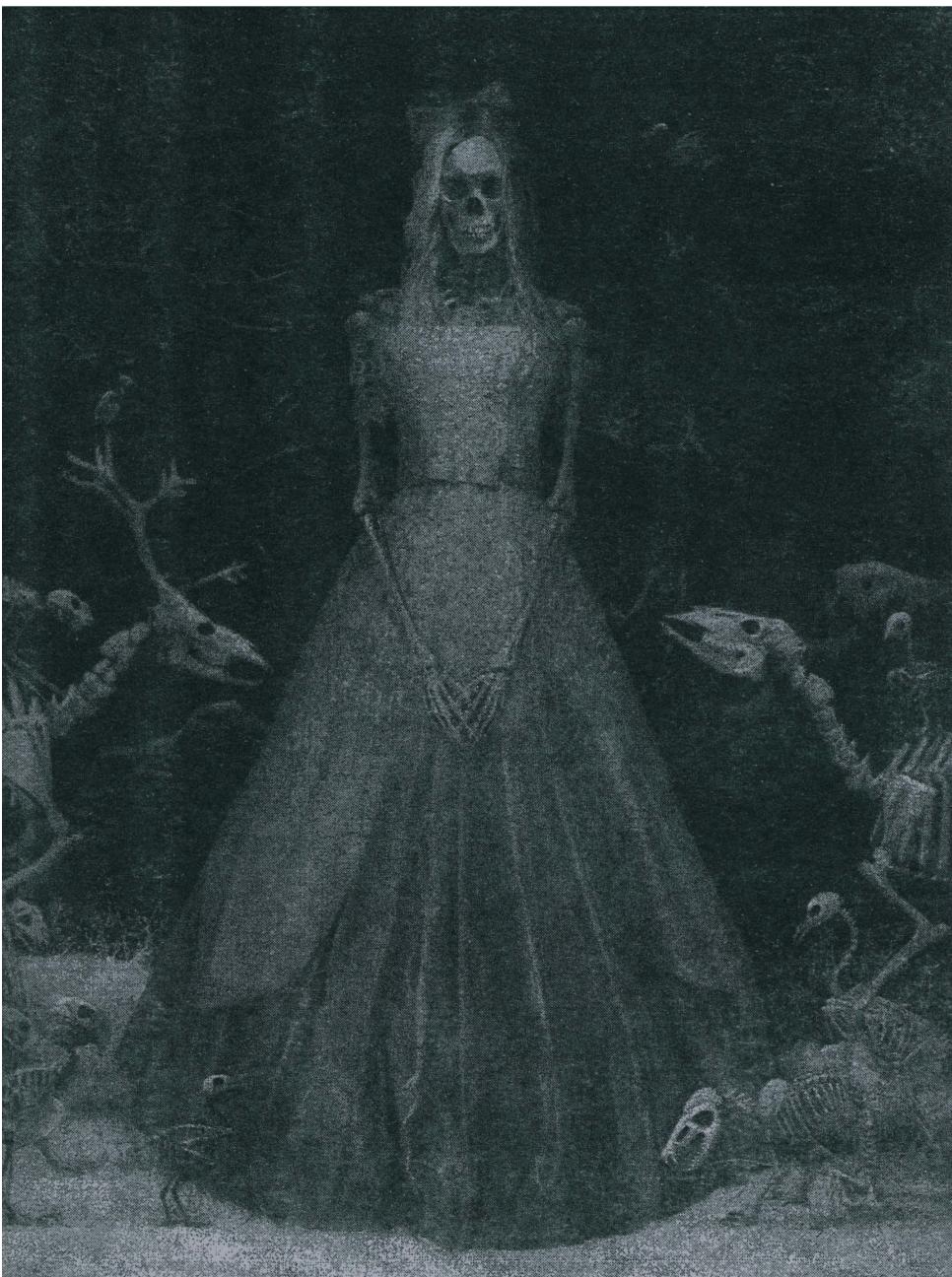


# TOO MUCH OF NOTHING

## An Anthology of Anti-Economic Thought



*“My conclusion, both from my experience and my readings, is that economy is a haunted realm, a realm of spooks. It makes abstractions of valuing, making efforts, sharing and trading, etc., transforming these relations individuals create with each other and with their worlds into cost and price, labor, market exchange, creating the need for a measuring fetish, money.*

*I can grant the possibility that all of this could be played as a game. But games are voluntary. The game players expect only those who choose to play to follow the rules and wouldn’t think of penalizing someone who didn’t want to play. But the economy doesn’t work that way. Everyone is forced to play, and those who try to step out and find another way to live are likely to be penalized severely. Herein lies the coercion inherent in the economy as it is: it allows for no outside, for no other game.”*

—Apio Ludd, *What is My Property?*

*“Like all good pathogens, civilization needed its carriers and over the centuries some of them—Christianity, war, imperialism—have had a massive multiplier effect, but none have yielded a higher-rate of return for the Empire Builders than money. In point of fact, the disaster of the Dark Ages was caused principally by decreasing money and falling prices. Without money, civilization could not have had a beginning, and with a diminishing supply, it must languish and unless relieved, finally perish. Money and civilization have usually marched onward together, and, recurrently, have declined together.”*

—*The Economic Decline of Empires*

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# Too Much of Nothing!

## An Anthology of Anti-Economic Thought

by Birdie Joe Hoakes

Most anarchist perspectives on economics amount to a makeshift tableau of anti-capitalist banalities borrowed on loan from Marxism and other socialist ideologies. This largely-unconscious Marxist bias (with its built-in duality of evil, stingy capitalists versus caring, philanthropic communists) has encumbered anarchist thought with a surface-level, dichotomous analysis of **economics itself**—pulling it ever deeper into the black hole of generic and impotent leftism. This one-way transfer of ideological currency has also led to an inflated estimation of the actual worth of secondary, throwaway orifices of Marxism, as exemplified in the presently chic anarchist infatuation with anti-state or left-communism.

My awareness of the left-communist current (which is a distinctly European phenomenon with no historically-significant American counterpart) began in 2000 or so, when I was living in Eugene, Oregon and befriended Lefty, the sole anti-state communist in a milieu otherwise top-heavy with green anarchists. Lefty was a standup guy who published a Situationist-influenced journal titled **Against Amnesia and Hangovers**, but notwithstanding this strong declaration of sobriety, he actually turned out to be a fun and reliable drinking companion (provided we frequented only bona-fide “working class” bars). I’ve always had doubts concerning the blind exaltation of the Situationists in bookish anarchist circles, particularly regarding the allegedly instigating role played by the Situationist International in the events of May ’68—which has (in my opinion) been excessively exaggerated (i.e. *spectacularized*) by the Situationists themselves and their devoted admirers. Were their ideas really “in everybody’s head” during those tumultuous days, or is this merely self-mythologizing on the part of the SI’s propaganda and advertising wing? I also have a hard time viewing the often-cited Theses 91-94 of *Society of The Spectacle* as truly informed critiques of anarchism, and instead see them as shallow quips based on a very reductionist reading of anarchist history.

Still, my personal interactions with Lefty convinced me that he was genuinely anti-authoritarian and I started to think that maybe it was possible to find some common ground with this other marginalized group of extremist dissidents (post-situ and ultra-left communists) in these dark, dire times. I found **Against Amnesia and Hangovers** acceptably stimulating, and despite the shadow of Marx that always hovered in the background, I thought Lefty had some sharp cultural and class insights which incorporated anti-statism as a core principle. So I eventually asked him to recommend some literature

to facilitate giving myself a crash course in this rather esoteric branch of communism—a form of communism that *seemed* to have a deeply radical agenda.

Lefty was overjoyed by my interest in his area of expertise (which didn't really enjoy too much respect locally) and started scribbling down titles right there on the spot, with special emphasis being placed on **The Eclipse and Reemergence of the Communist Movement** by Gilles Dauve. Well, the first thing I noticed when I began my study was that there wasn't a **spark** of wildness to be found in any of these texts, particularly this didactic dud. I can't understand the big splash this book made in the 70's, or the excitement it continues to elicit from the seemingly intelligent; I found it flat and mechanical, and about as inspiring as reading an auto-repair manual—and even as a piece of **advertising** for their Cause it fails miserably. And it's full of highly-quotable idiocies like these (all from the first chapter):

“Communism is not an ideal to be realized: it already exists, not as a society, but as an effort, a task to prepare for.” **Now there's a pretty persuasive Zen koan...**

“By definition, all human activity is social. Human life only exists in groups, through numerous forms of association.” **By whose definition? I personally prefer to spend most of my time alone and I'm pretty sure I'm still alive and active!**

“Capital creates a network of enterprises which exist only for and through profit and are protected by States which are no more than anti-communist organizations.” **Really, that's all the State is?**

“In order to avoid exploitation and anarchy at the same time, Utopian socialists organized social life in advance. Others, from the anarchist standpoint, refuse such authoritarianism and want society to be a permanent creation. But the problem lies elsewhere: only determined social relations based on a given level of development of material production make harmony among individuals both possible and necessary (which includes conflicts). Then individuals can fulfill their needs, but only through automatic participation in the functioning of the group, without being mere tools of the group. Communism has no need to unify what used to be separate but no longer is. This is also true on a world and even universal scale. *States and nations, which were necessary instruments of development*, are now purely reactionary organizations, and the divisions they maintain are an obstacle to development: the only possible dimension is that of mankind.” **I'm happy to say that I've never heard any anarchist (regardless of philosophical persuasion) claim that “states and nations were necessary instruments of development”!** Marxists, on the other hand, have no problem making these kinds of statements since they also believe that Capitalism was a “necessary” historical stage.

I could give many more examples of the incoherence that dominates this tract, but why bother? The whole book is just a condensed, “sound bite” version of Marx padded with a delirious amount of wishful thinking and it convinced me of nothing at all except how mundane and one-dimensional the Left-Communist perspective on life really is: the “dream” of communism turns out to be a **non-dream**. I mean, what are we fighting for here, heightened levels of Boredom?! So that’s Dauve, the main modern theoretician of left-communism, though like any other cult they have their pantheon of older martyred saints. The standard line of Dauve and the other Big Names of left-communist proselytizing is that “we have yet to see **real** communism in the world” and “**real** communism has yet to be tried”. And if so I’m elated, because left-communism turns out to be a highly civilized, acutely-repressed, insipid worldview that yearns for something even drearier than the way capitalism has organized its large aggregates. All the religious precepts of Marxism are still there (The Dialectic, Productive Forces, valorization), they’re fanatical believers in Progress, Industrial Development and Duty, and in their Historical (and totalistic) Mission—in short, they think and experience life **exclusively** within the Program Parameters of their ideology (or so their literature strongly suggests).

But then a strange thing happened: the more pissed off I became about their stale vision and sectarian redundancy, the more I started to develop an *interest* in their history and belief system (this often happens with something I **hate**); I wanted to understand their trip, and I wound up reading a lot of left-communist and council communist material from the twenties and thirties. To their credit, they had some strong critiques of nationalism and exhibited no patience with the “gradual withering away of the State”, and at certain times they actually had some impressive numbers. There *are* some undeniably admirable things about their tradition, to be sure, like their unambiguous anti-statism (while myopically overlooking that the State **is** the Managerial Class and that their global communist society would definitely require “management”) and the fact that they were among the first to turn on the Soviet Union and try to expose it (with many paying with their lives for this heresy); they also rallied to the support of the Kronstadt Rebellion when they learned of it. In fact, this is probably where their relationship/link with left-anarchism began, and where they began consorting with Russian syndicalists like Voline and G.P. Maximoff, who sounded the alarm in the anarchist world about what was happening to the Russian Revolution. So this is where the *association* with anarchism probably started, but to really understand the left-communist program and even consider it a **distant cousin** of Anarchy is a massive stretch. But some go further and begin to see left-communism as **synonymous** with anarchism. AK Press has been instrumental in propagating this mystification.

Concurrent with all this reading I was doing (and for the record, this research was never a **main** priority for me—and always just a side project) another unexpected phenomenon started to make its appearance: a wave of young anarchists (and this seemed to me like an international trend) began jumping camp and embracing left-communism and later, “autonomous” Marxism. In chorus, AK Press commenced a campaign to saturate the subcultural marketplace with a plague of German-Dutch Council Communist drivel (such as incalculably-stodgy Anton Pannekoek anthologies), while also promoting Bordiga, Dauve and Rosa Luxemburg with over-the-top hype in their catalog. To be perfectly frank, I think the left-communist vision is really at the heart of AK’s actual political agenda, and that their anarchism is almost a “dummy corporation” or front for what they’re really horny for: **leftist egalitarianism**. Because I was immersed in some of these texts when this epidemic erupted, I was....well, let’s just say I was shocked that anyone was actually **swayed** by these lifeless pontifications. For the first few years Dauve and “Aufheban” seemed to be all the rage, but eventually folks graduated to Deleuze, Guararri, Badiou and Agamben and post-modernism entered the mix in lethal doses. Since I’m used to being a detached critic of “fads,” I watched in jaded amusement and figured this pandemic would eventually just run its course and dissipate, but no, the murky-headedness spread by contagion and infects the quality of our conversations to this day.

The saddest facet of this was watching the “passions, dreams and desires” of former friends shrink and constrict when they donned this new social mask, which was often accompanied by an arrogance suggesting that “left-communism is what you come to when you finally outgrow anarchism and get **serious** about the struggle”. I even observed milieu acquaintances starting to dress like unemployed German factory workers from the 1920’s while they were going through their “left-communist” phase! It really just seemed like an urban aesthetic pose or a form of “revolutionary role-playing” to me, similar to Dungeons and Dragons or The Society For Creative Anachronism—only instead of pretending to be a wizard or a dwarf, you could temporarily assume the identity of a Green Anarchist or an ultra-left insurrectionary, a “crime thinker” or a Dutch Council Communist! The whole thing was ridiculously cartoonish to me and brought to mind the title of Lenin’s “official” response to Bordiga: *“Left-Wing Communism-An Infantile Disorder”* (an absolutely authoritarian document, but the title is great!). What was most distressing to me was how little evidence of individuality was present in any of this, as if the process of self-creation was too arduous and intimidating for some of these people and they just found it easier to slip into pre-existing, **loser** historic roles—instead of **authoring** their own lives.

## Regimented Anarchy

*“One other observation: Communism, as practiced in the insect world, is a poor recommendation for its possible effect on humanity. Nothing sickens me more than to watch the mechanistic activities of ants, who have certainly achieved the ultimate in regimentation and co-operation. I guess I must be an anarchist myself; and I am sure I would be strictly non-assimilable in any sort of co-operative society, and would speedily end up in a concentration camp.”*

---Clark Ashton Smith

Outside of left-communism proper are the other various hyphenated brands **within** the anarchist tradition that have usurped the name anarchist, employing it only as a paltry adjective (such as anarcho-communism, anarcho-syndicalism, anarcho-platformism). These oxymoronic strands in many ways seem to be just the rebellious offspring of the more overtly authoritarian collectivist movements, as they completely overlook the voluntaryist and individualist core of anarchist thought: that anarchy is not a system or form of organization, but the absence of rule—that is, the freedom to try (or not to try) every form of association that voluntary self-governing participants deem desirable for their purposes. Whether these associations or “unions” take on **organizational** forms or not is a matter for free individuals to decide, but one thing’s for sure, it isn’t **anarchy** when anyone is prohibited from seceding from the “communist federation” and setting up their own consensual, autonomous communities, in which they can freely experiment with any number of self-help measures and pleasure-enhancing activities (and maybe even partake in the “sin” of property, if that’s to their liking).

There are plenty of **practical** reasons for **freely** pooling resources and “communalizing” tools, food, shelter, etc., provided the decision to do so isn’t motivated by an ideological mandate or an overarching plan to **universalize** these arrangements as permanent social institutions. For instance, in the last twenty years I’ve often chosen communal living situations in order to cut back on my expenses and liberate more of my time, but the incentive in these decisions wasn’t communistic or ideological, but **egoistic**. Based on my own personal interactions with left-anarchists, it’s pretty clear that their egalitarianism and collectivistic distributionism comes before their anarchism, which turns out, in the end, to be little more than a “liberalized” Marxism that still aims to bind **everyone** in mutual dependence in the name of a social ideal (or more accurately, a **planetary** ideal).

As far as I’m concerned, the one and only commendable aspect of most communists is their atheism, but this is nullified by the way they’ve turned their prophet’s theories into a secular religion with universal communism

instead of god as its ideal, and Marx as its John the Baptist or Joseph Smith (and maybe Engels as Brigham Young?). All of Marx's crown jewel concepts—like “historical necessity”—are theological, teleological, and intensely alienating—which is what I thought Marx was concerned with “liberating” us from. Marx's progeny don't regard him as just another mere mortal, but as a SEER or ORACLE who's every prediction was like a divine vision or edict emanating from a heavenly source. Prophet Marx tells us that it is “our historical role to seize the means of production” and now we must devote our lives to this mission, just as the fanatical Muslim devotes their lives to the establishment of the planetary Caliphate. The Economy is, indeed, a religious faith (economics is its theology, with various wrangling schools of thought): Since Marxism is one of these schools of thought, its critique of economy can't hit at the heart of the matter. A theological school can't bring down the god that is the basis of its world, and for Marx and his faithful, economy is the basis of the world.

Now, one would think that any self-respecting anarchist would be immune to such doctrinal abstractions, but unfortunately this isn't the case, as so many anarchists are influenced by Marx whether **they're conscious of it or not**. Don't get me wrong: Most of the time capitalism has the taste of a pit without any exit, a labyrinthine corridor returning forever to its starting point, grinding the substance of our lives into hollow hours and changing minutes into penitentiaries. The despotism of Capital has reduced our species to one vast wound and every day the agony of its convicts accelerates, making it (along with overpopulation) one of the most pressing problems on the congested planet Earth. But anytime anarchists accept the rubberstamp Marxist “duty” to destroy capitalism as a categorical imperative, they're surrendering their **sovereignty** and in the process they're living out Marx's ideas and dreams, and not **their own....**

Furthermore (and this is far from a minor point), Marx's analysis of capitalism's workings is embarrassingly antiquated: Capitalism mutates all the time and the form it took in Marx's era—the form he obsessively scrutinized—was left behind 130 years ago. This isn't to imply that Marx was ever anything more than a megalomaniacal windbag, or that his “scientific discoveries” (translated: **personal fantasies**) were ever valid or useful, but just to point out that Marxism is a good example of a product with built-in-obsolescence. At **best**, the self-satisfied disciples of Marx have one **very small** piece of the puzzle (and even that's questionable), but they come to believe that this “knowledge fragment” contains all that there is to know about capitalism and that they can now smugly recline in cerebral stasis while they await the coming of the pre-ordained historical conditions (a faith-based excuse for what otherwise might be called failure).

Thanks in large part to the restricted vocabulary of Marxism and the left, many words formerly rich in meaning have become strongly attached and

frozen to their purely economic (and ideologically-driven) definitions, resulting in some pretty barren, impoverished investigations (and false critiques) of political economy. But if we take ideas and thoughts as our **playthings** instead of scripture, then a type of anarchic “declassification” of these captive words becomes possible, one capable of irreverently overturning the authority of these supposedly complete, closed bodies of knowledge (leftist economics and economics in general) and their imposition of formula and homogeneity on lived experience.

For instance, “consumption” and “consume”, in the capitalist sense, could be contrasted with Max Stirner’s outlook on **consumption**—the transitory, finite ego’s appropriation of the world as their own (“appropriation” in the same way a free thinker must make the literature s/he reads “his” or “hers” in order to understand it well, **own it** and reap the rewards). Or a term like “use value” could be radically inverted by comparing it with Stirner’s views on “use” (a union of egoists would be a great example, where individuals “use” each other for mutual benefit—and an increase in individual strength). Or how about redefining “possess(ed)” or “possessions” from an egoist perspective (debt as a kind of “possession”)?

But more than any word, the “utility” of the word **PROPERTY** needs to be reclaimed. When most anarchists use the word “property” it comes dripping off their lips with venom, carrying the heavy insinuation that the word is somehow tainted or corrupt, and its long been the stock-in-trade for Marxists and communists to condemn “property” (with pious certitude) as a categorical evil. But in truth, communists are so enamored of the property principle themselves that they hold it just as sacred as capitalists: In their ideal world, property will still be the central basis of society, only in an inverse arrangement, where the **proletariat** (the social class owning little or no property) is defrauded once again by the silver-tongued salesmen of revolution and repaid in full for their naiveté with a life of universal pauperization and utter dependency.

Again it’s Stirner, in *The Unique and its Property* (perhaps the most treasonous work to ever emerge from a single human mind), who cuts through these idealist illusions in his discussion of the “ragamuffin”. **Ragamuffin** is Stephen Byington’s translation of the German word “*Lump*” from which the term *lumpen-proletarian* is derived. “*Lump*” in German refers both to petty criminals (shoplifters, pickpockets, three card monte tricksters, smugglers) and to paupers. Stirner mocks the moralistic glorification of this powerless position and later, the British egoist Dora Marsden more painstakingly exposes the fallacies of this twisting of language (making a virtue of material weakness) in an essay concentrated on the “Ragamuffin”:

*No characteristic of civilized man cuts deeper than that of the ragamuffin. Most men and women desire to prove ragamuffinism to be the right thing because they hate the thought of its alternative. Quite the last thing they desire is to be independent, when independence in the first place means effort, and in the second place, responsibility; and widely extended individual ownership entails both.*

*There is nothing to be gained by glancing obliquely at the labor problems of civilization. The main difficulty of the matter is that the softness of civilization takes the pugnacious energy out of women and men. Faced with the rigors of nature, they have not the audacious pertinacity of more primitive peoples. The great mass of men are only too glad to creep under the sheltering arm of the few who prove relatively daring, no matter on what ignominious terms of dependence, rather than face the risk of justifying their existence by maintaining it. They feel safer, herded together, all mutually responsible, and none wholly responsible. The line to which civilized communities take to naturally, is that of the least exertion. This line also marks the road to ruin.*

The cruel paradox here is that a **propertyless** person will always be a hostage to those who own or control the wealth of whatever social machine they're forced to contend with--the obvious condition of the proletariat the world over, including every **communist** utopia—and a sure recipe for continued enslavement. The economic tyranny of large-scale communism (anarcho-*or* otherwise), with its forced and compulsory social arrangements, its inevitable need for a managerial class, and its inevitable resurrection of the State (though it might be renamed something like "the Federation") will never actually abolish class society or the proletariat, and therefore, I'm convinced that "property" (unvarnished with *sacred* and *alienated* attributes) is essential to independence and hence, **self-rule**. A material power base, although not a prerequisite to the performance of successful anarchic subversion, usually makes the job easier.

The above samples of smog are part of a miasma which, from the beginning, has threatened to envelop and obliterate the autonomy of anarchism as a body of ideas. For the most part, the influences under discussion come from outside anarchism, but there are at least two other equally bankrupt economic Ponzi schemes devised by anarchists themselves that merit some critical scrutiny: market anarchism and anarcho-capitalism.

## **The Absurdity of Anarcho-Capitalism**

Lamentably, even most egoist anarchists of the late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in the U.S. continued to come up with plans for an anarchist **society**, so it's not too surprising that many of the individualist anarchists associated with

Benjamin Tucker turned to Proudhon and market anarchism for this aspect of their thought (Stirner, being consistent, doesn't offer a whole lot for such planning; even the union of egoists is a fluid, temporary tool for use in the **here and now**, not a plan for an ideal society). That this is a contradiction (for egoists in particular) seemed to go unnoticed, even when it drove Benjamin Tucker to develop a very moralistic attitude towards property that utterly devalued his purported egoism. Tucker's long-running journal **Liberty** was certainly an *individualist* anarchist paper, but far too many of its pages were devoted to abstract economic debates—debates full of moralism and *a priori*, metaphysical assumptions about the Market.

This is ironic, because Tucker financed and published the first (and currently, only) English translation of Max Stirner's amoral tour de force, ***The Ego and His Own***, and professed great admiration for it. In fact, the advertisement that he first ran for it in **Liberty** read: "Some think it the anarchists' bible. Others call it the billionaires' bible. Read it and judge for yourself," indicating that he understood conscious egoism to be above the law, **any** law, including that of morality, and that it can (and would) be wielded for infinite purposes. Of all those involved with **Liberty** and with the American individualist/egoist milieu of that time, James L. Walker (author of ***The Philosophy of Egoism***) probably had the best understanding of Stirner and I suspect this is why he kept his distance from the endless economic debates. He could have very easily become anathema to Tucker if he'd argued a consistently egoist view of economic relations. Stirner's unfailing egoism led him to support the use of whatever means one may choose for acquiring what one needs or desires, and it's safe to say that Walker was quite aware of this. Tucker's economic morality, with its condemnations of theft (and willingness to set up social structures to punish it), simply couldn't tolerate these ideas.

Personally, I'd rather be smoking DMT than squandering what's left of my life designing intricate plans for labor notes, free banking, mutual credit, property protocol, and other never-to-be tested daydreams, but this is unerringly what the American individualist anarchists choose to put their drive into, all in an attempt to fashion an economic environment that disallowed Monopoly and gave everyone "a fighting chance". I'm not interested in debating whether the chaos of an unregulated market affords more opportunities for individual freedom than a fully controlled economy, like communism (looking at it non-ideologically, it probably does), but would rather consider market anarchism and Marxism as two sides of the same worthless coin, a coin forged by the theologians of the deity Economics. Both uphold the continuing existence of economy as a **sacred** realm based on dogmas, both are propelled by articles of faith rather than **lived experience**, and their adherents are all still slaves to an external value, an external idea, an external force—in this case, the spectral, "higher" power of the Economy.

But just what **is** this incorporeal, supra-collective, symbolic pattern called the Economy, and why does it function as such a nexus for the imaginative and emotional energies of leftists and anarchists alike? It's here that I find it helpful to step outside of "political theory" altogether and conceptualize the Economy through means of the occult term **egregore**. In occult lore, an egregore is an entity of a non-material nature that emerges from the psychic essence of great collectives, a dynamic structure or energized thought-form created by will and visualization, either consciously or unconsciously. Any symbolic pattern that has served as a focus for human emotion and energy (such as a nation) will build up an egregore of its own over time, and the more energy that is put into such a pattern, the more potent the egregore that will form around it. Some egregores are temporary, while some, like the egregore of a military organization (such as the Marines or the Foreign Legion), a church, or a country, are the result of the continuous will that creates them, and this will also **sustains** them over time. Perceived this way (*metaphorically*, not literally), the economy is plainly an egregore fed daily by continually reinforcing psychic conviction—a meta-narrative or meme whose advocates and detractors alike mistakenly believe has an actual existence.

Perhaps the most preposterous sub-sect or denomination devoted to the worship of this particular egregore are the anarcho-capitalists. Whereas market anarchism has an unbroken lineage within anarchist thought (for better or worse) going back to Proudhon, "anarcho-capitalism" is a peculiar anomaly that has almost no concrete connection to the anarchist tradition. Instead many anarcho-capitalists seem to see themselves as the torchbearers of **true conservatism** (witness Murray Rothbard's unnecessary study, *The Betrayal of the American Right*) whose opposition to the State most often resembles that of a frustrated accountant pulling their hair out in response to government overspending. Certain anarcho-capitalists, like Allen Thornton (author of *Laws of the Jungle*) may have genuinely anarchist critiques of the State, democracy and militarism, but end up controverting themselves by calling for "private security forces" (police) and "private arbitration companies" (courts) and the like (in this they follow a general market anarchist trend of calling for the market to take over the functions of the State). This is simply putting a new mask on the State, and at *minimum*, would lead to a revamped feudalism, with the most successful market manipulators forming cartels that would inexorably develop into business monopolies, i.e., a new plutocracy.

What's been more revealing to me about the nature of anarcho-capitalism than anything else though—as trivial as it may sound—has been "Googling" photos of their prominent theoreticians: Every one of these stiffs looks like a stockbroker, an investment banker or a lawyer, and they all seem to LOVE ties! Does their vision of personal liberation transcend compulsively counting their piles of money and drooling over their portfolios? At least Samuel

Konkin and his agorist crew (champions of the black market) seemed to have some counter-cultural roots, but these other dolts all look like Madison Avenue advertising executives from the 1950's....plastic clones utterly devoid of individuality. The one prominent anarcho-capitalist writer that I came across who actually had a tattoo is Peter Leeson, a 40-ish professor of economics who authored *The Invisible Hook: The Hidden Economics of Pirates*, a book in which he unimpressively uses "rational choice theory" to examine the economic conditions and incentives that influenced pirate behavior and resulted in their being (unbeknownst to the pirates themselves!) "pioneers of democracy".... He has a tattoo of a supply and demand curve on his right biceps!

At this point, what seems apparent is that anarchists need their **own**, real critique (or critiques) of economy. I would expect **multiple** critiques from anarchists, and think the potential debates and conflicts, if carried on intelligently, could be quite fruitful. But for myself, I think anarchists would do this best using an **egoist** method. To date, most anarchist "critiques" of economy have been moral judgments, not intelligent critiques. And most egoists have not applied the *egoist method* to the economy, but have rather taken some form of economic relations as a given; even Stirner only provides the beginnings for such a critique – in his rejection of sacred property – that implies the recognition of the *sacred*, i.e., spooky nature of the economy, but Stirner never really develops this critique (though large portions of his book are clearly aimed at the "property-less"). This has created a blindness that led to the above-mentioned attempts to wed egoism to market anarchism, Proudhonian mutualism, anarcho-capitalism and other absurdities. Of course, there is also no place for Marxist "historical materialism," or any other metaphysical ideology/sleeping potion, in this. The point is precisely to expose and undermine the metaphysics behind the economy, and since historical materialism is itself a spook, it can never do that. I'm definitely not out to create a cognitive "recovery plan" here, but I can think of at least 4 key points that would be crucial to an unbending anarchist understanding/repudiation of economics:

1) An independent anarchist relationship to economics would almost certainly have to start with Max Stirner's concept of **OWNNESS**. *Ownness* is not only central to an anarchist critique of economy, it's central to being an anarchist at all. One of the first spooks that conscious egoism annihilates is that of "essence" and "essence" is what Marxism is absolutely predicated on. I'll confess that I can't actually handle the mind-numbing experience of reading Marx, any more than I can handle the droning experience of reading Shakespeare, the bible or the constitution. However, I've read a **lot** of Marxist anthropology and it's both laughable and sinister how they (the Marxist anthropologists) project their own phantasmal notions like "means of production", "species being", "productive force", "exchange value", "division of labor", or even "labor" itself on to every culture they observe, attempting,

in effect, to assign a “universality” to these abstractions and reduce humans to primarily economic animals—thus making economics our “essence”. This sort of economic determinism should be intolerable to anarchists, as should our own historic experiences with communists and socialists of all stripes. Admittedly, anarchists have been lazy in their analysis of capitalism and economy in general and have been willing to let Marx do their thinking for them in these matters, but I think the recent high absorption rate of Marxist double-speak into our barely-persisting milieu is principally due to the Academy: Given the brutality and degradation of economic survival these days many younger anarchists are choosing college as an alternative to wage-slavery, and this is where they’re getting exposed to the last bastion of Marxism in the U.S., the university system, and it’s here that they also encounter its post-modern and post-structuralist spoilage. Hence, the enthusiasm for Deleuze and Guattari, Tiqqun and The Invisible Committee—as well as for “Aufheben”, Duave and other assorted “trends” that we’ve seen with the youth of today. But communism can’t be rehabilitated and has no place in anarchist discourse—unless it’s in terms of “studying your enemy”. Any impartial audit of Marx’s philosophical balance-sheet would have to concede that he didn’t really hate capitalism so much as admire and envy it; he was mesmerized by (and jealous of) its power and turned “labor” into even more of a religion than it is under capitalism, with its Protestant origins.

2) As far as a distinctly egoist critique of communism goes, I would say it starts with the recognition that communism can never be implemented on a large scale except by force, that is to say, INVOLUNTARILY. Why? Because it denies the fundamental egoism of the human animal (or, as my good friend Wolfi so succinctly put it during a recent conversation: “life itself is egoistic”) and very few people would voluntarily choose it. Communism either disregards or seeks to “reform” (like other religions) the relation between individual effort and desired benefits (however we as individuals define ‘benefits’ or gain) and pretends that self-interest is somehow not the paramount urge in life: the only communist experiments that lasted any length of time were those bulwarked by a strong religious sentiment and there’s a reason that after the fall of the Soviet Union its former prisoners were eager to pursue personal economic gain. This is not to glorify capitalism or to suggest that it’s somehow “natural”, but simply that the “profit motive” –which is experienced differently by every individual—is not going to be “abolished” or “programmed out” of people, and we would squander less of our precious time if we stuck with the actual observed tendencies of humans as they are. Mutual aid works best when everyone involved are receiving personal ‘benefits’ from it, in other words, gain, PROFIT. Why deny it? Instead of SUPPRESSING these facts let’s work with them.

3) Property as Sacred: This is the place to start the attack, as conscious egoism is at war with the “sacred” in all its forms. In almost all ways, standard political and economic theories are shallow maps, for the problem of capitalism and its liquidation doesn’t rest solely on the level of mechanical politics, but on the cultural SACREDNESS of property, and especially money—therefore we need to sabotage not only the existing social order, but the *existing social perceptions*, which are really what keep people in thrall. I don’t want to oversimplify things, because obviously capitalism is a system of forced complicity and collusion via blackmail, a game that demands **everything** from each of its players/captives and where dropping out is difficult, but getting off the chessboard that capitalism calls “reality” (where we are all involuntarily integrated into one massive multi-player role-playing hallucination) starts with seeing that the “Economy” is only a collective mental construction, one that has been invested with the authority of a paramount, OBJECTIVE reality because it’s been made sacred.

The religious roots of all this are pretty fascinating to me: at least in Mesopotamia, Sumer and Greece, money issuance began in the temples and was intimately connected with religion, and hence, “sacred” from the get go. Since Money holds sway over the entire terrain of modern living it would probably benefit anarchists to develop a usable critique of the totemic quality it seems to have for most people. And this is a question that I personally spend a lot of time pondering: just *how have* our lives become so inextricably bound to a symbol (money)? Clearly, money is an agreed-upon illusion that is being constantly refined to new levels of abstract faith, visible only if one consciously pauses to consider how these mere scraps of paper have been conferred with such power and meaning. Again, I think this is a carry-over from its religious origins, and here’s a quote I like from Norman O. Brown that relates to all this:

“The money complex, archaic or modern, is inseparable from symbolism; and symbolism is not the mark of rationality, but the mark of the sacred. If we recognize the essentially sacred character of archaic money, we shall be in a position to recognize the essentially sacred character of certain specific features of modern money—certainly the gold standard, and almost certainly also the rate of interest. As far as gold and silver are concerned it’s obvious to the eye of common sense that their salient characteristic is their absolute uselessness for all practical purposes. Mankind has clearly consented to put an imaginary value upon gold and silver, and measured by rational utility and real human needs, there is absolutely no difference between the gold and silver of modern economy and the shells and dog teeth of archaic economy. The ultimate reason why the money complex cannot dispense with symbolism is that it originates in denial of reality (fantasy) and there is nothing in reality that corresponds to it.”

—Norman O. Brown, *Filthy Lucre*

Of course, money escaped the exclusive control of the priests and started to serve other purposes: that money itself is both a symbol and declaration of “conquest” can’t be overstated, in my opinion. From at least the days of the Greek and Roman empires coinage has been a major instrument of State policy and of far-reaching imperial propaganda. Prior to Alexander the Great’s period of supremacy, most Greek coins bore the images of various deities and were emblazoned with seals or signets associated with those deities, as a type of magical property mark. Alexander changed this by substituting his head for that of Zeus as king of the Olympian gods on Greek coins, essentially transforming Greek money into the badge or coat-of-arms of the State. These coins, all monarchical badges advertising Greek power and influence, spread far and wide and enormously facilitated and clearly symbolized the degree of Alexander’s success in war, conquest and trade. Since this new money was the product of successful military campaigns the pace of Greek monetary expansion was naturally greatest during this period, and from most available evidence, Alexander appears deliberately to have minted far more coins than justified by the needs of trade, capitalizing on prevalent beliefs that the stamped metal carried the *mana* of the King, which the royal personage filled with a magic potency. This new imperial orientation of money also became a main instrument of dominance within the Roman Empire, where each coin bore the emperors portrait or that of a member of his immediate family, sending a palpable message to those who came in contact with the coins that they were “inhabitants” (read: subjects) of the Roman Empire. For the next 500 years the design of Roman coins portrayed the ascendancy, commands, ambitions, lives and lies, of its rulers. Some economic historians are so enthusiastic in their assessment of the propaganda value of Roman money that they go as far as saying that “the primary function of Roman coins was to record the messages which the emperor and his advisers desired to transmit to the populations of the empire”.

Or to bring the subject closer to home: most people think that the symbol for the US dollar—\$—is derived from the initials U and S superimposed on each other, when in actuality it’s an ancient Phoenician sign (\$) indicating military strength and sovereignty. Not only have the “sacred” qualities of money gotten stronger over time, but so have it’s IMPERIALISTIC qualities, as the internal logic of money is inherently universalistic, necessarily devouring all sources of value **other** than money. This collective hallucination (because in the end, ALL money is Monopoly money) has been so successful that now, in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is almost no other operative myth but the money myth, and very few viable ways to achieve personal distance from business culture since we no longer have a life, a history, a consciousness apart from it. Our collective mental universe has been radically circumscribed by the “money code”, enclosed within such an extremely narrow frame of reference that it is beyond the ability of most people to imagine or theorize a life without money—or even a world where money exists but isn’t taken seriously.

4) THE UTTER REJECTION OF ANY CONCEPTION OF DEBT: Having a more than passing interest in etymology, I think the psychological enclosure of “debt” comes back again to religion and the “sacred”. Debt means *obligation*, a word that comes from the Latin word *ligare* - to bind - and which is also at the root of the word “religion,” “*re-ligare*”. Becoming familiar with the semantic origins of this confidence trick helps to “spell-OUT” and illuminate the complex web of psychic associations involved with money, the fantastic implications attached to it, and especially how this is enjoined by the concept of debt. The German word for “debt” is *Schuld*, which also means **sin**, as well as its compensating restitution payment. The German word *Geld* and the English word “guilt” come from the same source - *Geld* in Old German meant “sacrifice,” and has the same source as *vergeltung*, “revenge”. **SACRIFICE** comes from the Latin *sacrificium*, from *sacrificus* “performing priestly functions or sacrifices,” from *sacra* “sacred rites” (prop. neut. pl. of *sacer* “sacred”) + root of *facere* “to do, perform”. Its use in the sense of “something given up for the sake of another” was first recorded in the 1590s, where it was also defined as offering (anything) as a gift to a deity. Then it morphed into (in transitive) meaning **trade** (a value of higher worth) for something of lesser worth in order to gain something or someone else valued more, such as an ally or business relationship or to avoid an even greater loss.

The way I see it, the whole economic setup is **based** on debt. I read some study recently that every U.S. bill regardless of denomination costs just 4 cents to make, yet already contains within it \$1.75 in ‘debt’ and is in a way “hexed” with a **negative vitality** before it even enters circulation!. It is by means of this imaginary “debt” that the Global ruling class extract our living strength and energy in order to power their colossal enterprise. It’s a program of *pau-perization through interest* that confines most of us to the role of market-driven peasants, terrorized into acceptance of whatever conditions of life the Money Barons are willing to charge us for. But people go along with their own destruction by believing in this “debt” and other related phenomena, and are seemingly incapable of actualizing a vision of life radically different to that encoded by the State, the Economy, and the commodity system. And as far as the counterfeit “alternative” goes, Communism would only **increase** the level of debt we live under, as now the debt to “society” would be even greater.

## **The Transvaluation of All Economic Value**

First of all, the idea that there is some **objective**, discoverable or “scientifically verifiable” standard of value is pure, unadulterated nonsense, and is similar to arguing that there is some objective standard of morality floating around in the heavens, or that the Ten Commandments correspond to something real or actual. Economists and—even more so—**Marxists** are obsessed with inventing various yardsticks with which to measure and gauge “value”,

but what it ultimately comes down to is that **value** is always a matter of personal taste or preference—no different from how we designate a superior “value” to music we like over music we don’t like. Speaking of concepts like “use value”, “exchange value” or “labor value” as if they **actually exist** and can be “proven” is total metaphysics: These concepts are about as “real” to me as the higher forms of math are!

Why anarchists are still wrestling with these Marxist ethereal mechanics or even trying to make use of them at all is beyond me. If we reject morality as a non-existent spook then why not “value” as well, which is simply one of morality’s children operating in a slightly different realm?

George Schumm, a German-American anarchist associated with Benjamin Tucker, wrote an insightful essay on Stirner that we’re planning to publish in its entirety in a future pamphlet project—but I want to quote from its closing paragraphs now, because I think they pertain to some of the points I’m trying to make about the subjective nature of “value”:

“Stirner found it impossible to make his living with his pen, and was obliged to turn his attention to other employments. But again the same difficulty confronted him, and his paths appear to have been none too smooth. The last ten years of his life, like the first, are shrouded from us by an impenetrable mist. Thrown upon his own resources by the struggle for existence, he is rarely seen among his old friends during this period, and no one knows what he is thinking or doing. Taciturn as he was, he kept his struggles and his joys to himself. No complaint ever crossed his lips, though it is known that at last he hardly knew where to lay his head. Harrassed by creditors, he was driven from lodging to lodging, and twice he suffered poor debtor’s imprisonment. True to himself to the end, he died suddenly on June 25, 1856, from the effects of the sting of a poisonous fly, and three days later he was buried, attended only by a few of his old friends, among these Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Buhl.

A sad ending? Undoubtedly. But possibly not so sad as it may appear to him who, abdicating his sovereignty, falls into line with the powers that be and estimates life by the rewards of servility. With patronizing mockery such as one may suggest that the teacher of egoism has either poorly “recked his own rede”, or that its observance has borne him bitter fruit. But I believe with Mackay that Stirner was thoroughly at one with his philosophy, that he reaped all the fruits so far as they came within his reach, and that the severity of his lot was undoubtedly mitigated by his native serenity and the reflection that, all appearances to the contrary, he filled the position of a sovereign in the world. For, as Nietzsche has it, in a very true sense, and to an eye trained for the spectacle, the princes, politicians, professors, merchants, and farmers of the world, in working for ends not their own, are essentially slaves, while the non-conforming and independent thinker, though he go through life naked and with a beggar’s staff, is a master.”

This is an assessment that resonates deeply with me, for as helpful as a certain degree of economic “security” or economic empowerment might be to me as I live out my life journey/adventure, what I ultimately **value** above all else is my independence—particularly my **independence of mind**. Hence, the respect and affinity I feel for someone like Diogenes (who was ultimately the free man while Alexander the Great was the slave) or Chuang-Tzu, or even an uncompromising wingnut like Charles Fourier—who may have lived and died in painful poverty, but was at least the “god” of his own universe. Sure, I could choose the “security” of “going to school”—as many of my friends have done—over all the unknowns and variables of my freelance economic existence, but at what price? Having some self-dictated authority instruct me in **how to think**? Resuming the domestication process that began in kindergarten and that I willfully cut short when I dropped out of high school? Or maybe I could find a “good” job, one where I’m “compensated” for my punctuality and dependability with an assured income, health insurance, and two weeks paid vacation every year? No thanks, that’s a price I’m unwilling to pay in exchange for an illusory “stability”: I **value** being unfettered more than anything and if that mode of existence carries with it no guarantees, then so be it, I still wouldn’t have it any other way. Yes, this is a terrain of uncertainty that I inhabit, but it’s also a **playground of relativity** where allegedly immutable rules and governing structures can be pissed on, erased, ignored, fractalized, and reconfigured to my personal advantage—risky business for sure, but **free**.

I’m certainly not trying to make a virtue of fiscal paucity here, I’m just trying to say that there is no **objective price tag or standard** for what I value (even if the rest of the world believes that objective value to be contained and embodied in Money), it’s an entirely individual matter, and the values that I **create** and **assign to the world around me** are formed **outside** of the capitalist frame of reference that encloses material reality. I deal with capitalism because I have to, but fortunately I have a strong immunity to the repetitive brute force techniques of its advertising wing and very little interest in anything it’s trying to sell me—and I make damn sure that the goals and values I pursue in this world are of my own making (and not determined by “the Market” or the Dow Jones Industrial Average).

## **Anti-Economic Thought**

“After years spent analyzing dreams, money is seen to be nothing other than deodorized, dehydrated shit that has been made to shine.”

—Sandor Ferenczi, “The Ontogenesis of the Interest in Money”

I get supremely irritated when I hear self-styled radicals refer to Marx’s “critique” of political economy, because any **real** critique of political economy would reject it entirely. Marx **had** no critique of political economy, he just

wanted to take over the field by flooding it with his own concepts (he also had no real “critique” of ideology, but simply wanted **his** ideology to reign supreme above all others). Economics is concerned with establishing fictitious “laws” and “fixed principles” for what have never traditionally been **dominant** aspects of the human experience—such as production and consumption (in many cultures these activities didn’t exist at all)—and Marx, since he not only embraces these capitalist categories, but **expands** upon them and introduces new ones of his own like “labor value” and “historical materialism”, fails to provide any real substitute to capitalism or to political economy itself.

As readers have probably ascertained by now, I consider The Economy one of my main enemies, and even though it’s allied itself with the State for its stabilizing function, I still view the Economy as something distinct (I’ll elaborate on this more fully later). For now, I’ll just say I think it’s important for anarchists to view Economics as a **System**, a System that relentlessly seeks to reconstruct everything in its own image, and also to recognize that Marx and his disciples are solidly **within** that System—and not *against* it.

In my opinion, anarchists need to remain not only anti-political but **anti-economic**, resolutely and violently so, and reassert their **ownness** (in all matters) in order to sweep away the putrid encrustations of leftist rhetoric, moralism, idealism and Marxist religiosity which are smothering their critical and creative faculties. Marx was never out to **destroy** economics as a prison of alienation, but instead sought to make economics our state of being, to make human life the functional equivalent of **economics** as a worldview—exactly as capitalism attempts to do. Anarchists thought and activity should therefore strive, in all its forms, to **escape** this economicistic dimension and to extirpate the “spook” of economics from our *authentic* dreams as we would a septic tumor.

Thanks to projects like AK and PM Press (yawn) there’s now a glut of anarchist “product” on the market, but most of it has the nutritional value of cotton candy and there remains a gnawing scarcity of *inspirational abundance*. We’ve sought to improve upon this imaginative deficit with this collection, which brings together top-shelf anarchist analysis that is not only explicitly anti-political, but **anti-class** and **anti-economic**—anarchist theory that rejects the rule of economy entirely. So what do I mean by **anti-economic** analysis and could I cite a few noteworthy examples? High on my list would be a lot of the Italian material translated by Wolfi Landstreicher over the years, such as **The Undesirables** and **The Price of an Entire World** by Massimo Passamani, the priceless **Let’s Destroy Work, Let’s Destroy the Economy** by Alfredo Bonanno, the literature of anarchist illegalism (of which we publish many titles) and **The Reproduction of Daily Life** by Fredy Perlman. These are all inspired, seditious tirades that combat stifling and inertial Marxist structural delusions (to which left-leaning anarchists ascribe an unwarranted

profundity) instead of supporting them, and these are also all writings that are refreshing in being an *attitude* rather than a system of petrified thought. The foremost characteristic of this attitude is that the individual remains of paramount importance over invented constructs and collective chimeras like economic law or the Market—a dangerous, alternative worldview completely at odds with both capitalist **and** leftist rationality.

A truly spell-breaking take on “general economy” is Georges Bataille’s **The Accursed Share**, a 3-volume study which is difficult to locate on *any* political meter—a blasphemous, destabilizing thesis that could almost be viewed as the **apocalypse** of political economy. Bataille’s positing of a fundamental human drive towards expenditure without return challenges capitalist ideas about the psychological motivations that govern economic activity. Haughtily contemptuous of bourgeois values (deferment of gratification, accumulation, and calculating prudence) Bataille’s own table of virtues are aristocratic; where Marxism mirrored the economism of the bourgeois worldview, Nietzsche and de Sade are Bataille’s ancestors and prophets of sovereignty. Historically, the sovereign was defined by the consumption of wealth, rather than its production (which in Bataille’s view is always servile and alienated). Bataille expands this particular meaning of sovereignty to include any form of existence that isn’t subordinated to utility, that doesn’t involve the employment of the present for the sake of the future.

One more scintillating work that I discovered last year, pretty much by chance, is **Money and Magic (A Critique of the Modern Economy in Light of Goethe’s Faust)** by H.C. Binswanger. The key theme of the book is that modern economics is alchemy carried on by other more effective means—or “alchemical economics”, with the economy viewed as a mere “conjunction” and money explained as “a fiction based on a fraud”—where, on a psychic plane, the economic magicians accomplish what the medieval alchemists could not: creating gold from dross, fortunes from mere paper, and a wide-ranging social prison through a transmutation of perception. One fascinating concept the author develops is that of **sulphurous impression**, which is the impressive authority of an emperor or government on a bank note, when the money is consecrated by official decree. Through this concept he explores the mysterious power paper money and coinage seem to take on when they are “State-authenticated” and how the Pyramid on the dollar bill, like the Two-Headed Eagle, Stars, Sun, Moons, etc., with which other nations have seen fit to adorn their state currencies, is intrinsic to the “spookiness” of the whole monopolization of *mana* or psychic energy by the State (Here are two pieces of green paper: one is money, the other is not. The difference is that the former was “blessed” by the wizards in the Treasury Building).

Biswanger then investigates what “economic alchemy” means in **ecological** terms:

*Money is by its nature an order for the future, for what one can buy in the future by spending it, or gain in the future, as yield or interest, by investing it. One can therefore virtually say “money is future.” But since the economy is geared to money values, the future is lost again because the money value can only be secured through constant additional consumption of the world, for this money must be covered by real goods excavated from the mine of the world. The future is then threatened to the extent that the world is limited, that is, the world mine is exhausted.*

Since I see the Economy as one big shell game and have a strong attentiveness to the role that **belief** plays in its perpetuation, I enjoyed the angle from which this book approached it all, and definitely found it more convincing than the perfunctory, predictable tropes of the Left. But there are more direct routes to understanding the phenomenon of economics than tracking down rare and unusual tomes: About once a month, the local library here in my bioregion discards boxes of old magazines and sometimes I'll bring home a stack of publications like “Forbes”, “Fortune” and “The Wall Street Journal”, get stoned and study the pathology of it all, because I feel that it's here that capitalism as a civic religion (and money as its sacrament) is exposed in all its naked horror, by the financial High Priests themselves. It's where the whole enormous, puerile, cosmetic façade of The Economy is revealed for what it is. The perplexing economic language employed by this society's financial priests usually makes it easier for the peasantry to block out the money question entirely—and to accept instead its powerful mystery. High Finance, with its secrecy and obscure language, with its tradition of unknowable processes, has done an exceptional job of protecting money's illusions by generally keeping an austere distance from public examination, but it's in the pages of these endlessly self-referential “church organs” that it all gets demystified—and I don't need the abstract idealizations of Marx to help interpret any of what I'm examining.

## Money as Species Being

“The language of the bank and the stock market abounds in expressions equating money, feces and intestinal activity: a person in financial difficulties is said to be “constipated”, a newcomer to the stock exchange is called a “shit breech”, the rich are “filthy with money”, “so rich they stink,” bank officials in Germany are *Dukatenseheisser*, (excretors of ducats), debtors are “up to their necks in shit” and economics supplies us with the terms “squeeze” (a market condition in which one can't meet an obligation to deliver future goods) and “hard” and “soft” currency as if we were talking about bowel

movements. Popular speech, world mythology, and economic history are all replete with further revealing examples validating the money=feces equation. Consider such English colloquialisms as “tight-arsed” (describing those reluctant to spend money) or the phrase children use to describe their visits to the toilet: “doing one’s business”. Or reflect for a moment on the widespread superstition that when a bird defecates on someone’s head it’s considered a sign of good luck (similar themes emerge in the countless legends/fairy tales of the “Golden Ass” and the “Goose That Lays the Golden Eggs”). An even more graphic scatological illustration comes to us from the annals of Papal Law: in Medieval Italy, insolvent debtors had to let down their pants in front of the Palace of Justice, expose their naked bottom, and strike a large paving stone with their buttocks as a crowd looked on (this custom is the source of the expression “*batter il culo sul lastrone*”, i.e., to become bankrupt). Again, this is all well-known to anyone with even a passing interest in the symbolism of the unconscious.”

-- Ernest Bornemann, **The Psychoanalysis of Money**

In a recent essay, anarchist writer Apio Ludd asks “How could Marx not see that money would be the force that would create the species being?” and also makes the observation that contemporary money is “becoming more and more a purely electronic force, creating a petty, meagre, small-minded species being”. What does this say about what humans have allowed themselves to be reduced to, with so much “money” only existing as data entry on a computer screen, making it almost abstract as pure information is in communications theory?! How is it that the activity of ceaseless money generation has catapulted itself to the top of the fabric of human ideation?

Far, far beyond any of the superficial bullshit Marx was theorizing about, a more insidious force has arisen in the world and Money now governs most human activity, in almost all instances, because we’re forced to **think** in the **language of money**; it is the global monoculture’s Main Operating System, it imposes its language on whatever society it conquers, and it does so in a way that subjugates all other institutions. The dominance of the money spook has come to define a shared worldview, effectively codified into law—a consensus trance that constitutes the focal point of modern world culture, whereby money aggressively eclipses or absorbs the other dominant spooks (nationalism, religion, statism) to eventually replace all illusions with just one, its own, and establish itself as the Reality Principle. And for this Reality Principle to continue growing and remain viable, more and more of the natural world and all manner of human relationships must be *monetized*. EVERYTHING must sooner or later be converted into **money**.

The Earth is being hammered by this incessant war—suffering from accelerated entropy—from the activities of humans strip-mining for fool’s gold on a mega-scale. And the primary agent of this sickness is raw unencumbered **economics**. As cliché as it’s become to use “disease” metaphors or analogies when discussing these things, I still feel that Cancer in metastasis is the best way to adequately describe what all industrial economic systems are doing to life on Earth. Both cancer and these economic systems grow primarily for the sake of growing, like self-replicating expansionist programs, while they busily tear asunder, toxify and finally destroy their host body. But aside from my wrath over all the non-human life-forms being obliterated by this “emptiness that devours”, what I really want to look at here are the effects that this cancerous machine-culture of ECONOMICS has in the sphere of human thought—how it insinuates itself into our very organism, colonizes our psyche, subdues the quality and range of our desires, poisons our perceptions, and claims a huge territorial stake in how we experience “reality”. Economics grows by implanting parts of its own anti-matter program into other lifeways, infiltrating them bit by bit, first in small ways, then in catastrophic fashion, until finally it engulfs them and the individuals comprising these cultures **become** the Economy.

So I don’t think one can get very far in understanding “the Economy” if they only look at it with the eyes they’ve developed to play “the Game” of our current consumerist-capitalist society—or if they try to comprehend it through the pronouncements of the supposed “experts” on the subject, like Marx. We have to learn to look under the surface, because the depth of the problem is immense, and ideally, we should at least be *aware* of what we’re participating in. “WE” are enmeshed in something vast and ancient, a multi-layered slave system that not only physically coerces our participation in its feeding and maintenance, but which is also the foundation of our economically-coded **internal reality**. And it has existed in us for a long time: it’s been engraving its laws into our bodies and welding its slavery machine into our consciousness for thousands of years. If there’s been any “progress” or “stages of history” over the last ten-thousand years, it’s been the evolution and development of this Slave System, which I call Civilization, and The Economy (with a capital E) is the zenith of all the forms (Feudalism, monarchism, religious empires, various Mega-machines, and, oh yeah, how could I forget....**communism**) it has assumed over the centuries.

One fringe anti-economic thinker that I respect and who seems to really understand the depth of Capital’s penetration into the region of personal subjectivity—and the formation of “reality”—is the outré “communist” Jacque Camatte. There’s a lot of ways to look at this *colonization by Capital*: One could employ Wilhelm Reich’s theories of character-armoring and talk about being “blocked by layers of frozen subjectivity” or of how capitalism “wires

our nervous and muscular systems into specific **armorings patterns**”, and inscribes **in the flesh** its fundamental principles. Or one could make use of the anarcho-primitivist critique of domestication (one of the more vital considerations primitivists have brought to the table) and take a hard look at what **domestication** produces: docile, neurotic, weak, unhappy and obedient masses, with the character-structure of integrated circuits. There are many critical tools that can be used to examine the totality of the System we live under, but I have to say that Camatte at times comes very close to how I see things with my own eyes—at least with regard to life under the rule of economic administration and coding. Camatte asserts that we have entered a particular period of capitalism which he calls the “Despotism of Capital”, a situation in which no substantial boundaries (at least any that can’t be overcome) to capital exist. In his analysis, it’s not the case that capital dominates society, as some kind of lording power, but rather that capital itself **constitutes** the entire community through a process of **anthropomorphis**. Here capital transforms itself into nothing more than human behavior, and human behavior into nothing more than capital. This happens through capital’s tendency to mediate all human activities, and therefore comprise all of humanity’s relationships within its’ infinitely recursive structure. He describes this almost viral process in stark detail in the following passage:

*“Capital enslaves humanity in the very name of humanity because it is anthropomorphized. This is nothing other than the reign of death. Human beings are dominated by their past being, while they contemplate it. It is a process which continually starts over again. Capital penetrates thought, consciousness, and thus destroys human beings such as they have been produced by centuries of class society. Their loss of substance is the loss of their former being, which capital has pumped out of them. Since this process is almost over, capital is now turning from its attack against the past dimension of humanity to an attack against its future dimension: it must now conquer imagination. The human being is thus despoiled and tends to be reduced to the biological dimension. The phenomenon reaches the roots. In other words, the development of productive forces appears to have been necessary for the destruction of old schemas, modes of thought, archaic representations which limited human beings (this destruction is now being analyzed by philosophers like Foucault). Threatened in their purely biological existence, human beings are beginning to rise against capital. It is at this point that everything can be re-conquered by generalized creation. But this becoming is not simple, unilinear. Capital can still profit from the creativity of human beings, regenerating and resubstantializing itself by plundering their imaginations.”*

Connected to Camatte’s ideas on the **anthropomorphis** of Capital is his startling (but difficult to refute) thesis on the universalization of the proletariat, whereby all classes move towards the condition of **proletarianization**, as more

and more of life takes the appearance of work, and work takes the appearance of life. Linked to this claim is that the ruling class (as traditional Marxists conceive it) ceases to exist, since Capital ultimately dismantles even bourgeois society, because it blocks the trajectory of Capital's overall subsumption of daily life (which aspires to a complete remodeling of the human organism). But is this really the same as the total *disappearance* of the ruling class? It seems self-evident that there exists a strata that populate the commanding heights of the global order. But do they truly rule, Camatte asks? Are these sections any less dominated and alienated by Capital, or any less hardwired to its logic of totalistic consecration? This is a provocative line of questioning which results in no comforting, dualistic answers.

While ideologically certain figureheads seem to take on the appearance of feudal Sun Kings (depending on the fluctuations of various social discourses), their personal existences are no longer crucial to the continuation of the social order, in the same way that a monarch or pharaoh's was. Those who are at the top of the pyramid of capitalism also exist totally within social structures/reigning paradigms and are severely coded by them; viewed through this lens, the ruling class are no longer the Grand Manipulators of collective phantasms (the nation-state, the Law, etc.), but are now exclusively under the sway of one of their own invented phantasms—that revered mathematical abstraction, the Economy—and bequeath their lives to its endless sanctification and enlargement. Capital is omnipresent and internalized—its' phantasmal nets, baits and traps constituting an *intersubjective social relationship* that, in a sense, levels all classes (including the ruling class) to standardized components of the capitalist Imperium.

Conversely, Camatte doesn't continue to stupidly locate the center of gravity with the working class, who are also clearly not "functioning" in the way reductionist thinkers were led to expect by rusty Marxist models of the proletariat and the mossy class-war context in which this was positioned (at the purely empirical level and on the Mass scale, the terminal assimilation of the "working class" into the virtual reality of the Economy is obviously the dominant tendency). A generalized denial, or dislocation of awareness, concerning this universal proletarianization is woven into the fabric of capitalist existence, fortifying a condition of pervasive surrender to the "supreme and original program"—the work ethic—and to the ongoing strangulation of the planet. Here Camatte makes an even more dramatic break with old-style Marxism and begins to develop an explanation for the lethargic acquiescence of the masses in the face of this total absorption by Capital, which he feels is to be found in the ***domestication of humanity***.

To Camatte, the domestication of humanity and the rise of the despotism of Capital are impossible without each other: their existences allow the other to

function. There is a price to pay for civilization, and that price is the inhibition of primary instincts in return for the sublimated profits of the modern social topography with all its mediated exchanges. Domestication—the reduction/destruction of humanity's wild subjectivity—begins with the earliest Neolithic origins of civilization, reaching new heights with the intensification of the despotism of Capital. The Process starts with civilization feeding its slaves and prisoner's small humiliations, daily defeats, despair and dullness in negligible doses that settle down in them, layer after layer, like sediment, until over time their consciousness is choked with sludge. The domestication of humanity is the social/psychological state of the processes already discussed; the effect of this is that Capital captures and transforms the fundamental critical facilities—the ability to think autonomously, conceive independently and communicate effectively—wiring them as part of the broader social circuitry:

“The time we are now living through is without doubt the most critical period capitalist society has ever known. All the features which we associate with the classic crisis now exist as a permanent state of affairs, though production itself has not been affected, except to a limited extent in certain countries. Social relations and traditional consciousness are decomposing all around us, while at the same time each institution in society proceeds to ensure its survival by recuperating the movement which opposes it. One would think that the violence and torture which is now endemic everywhere would have people mobilized and up in arms against it, but instead it continues to flourish on a world scale. Indeed, the situation today makes the “barbarism” of the Nazis seem in comparison rather unprofessional, quite archaic in fact. All the conditions would seem to be ripe; there should be revolution. Why then is there such restraint? What is to stop people from transforming all these crises and disasters, which are themselves the result of the latest mutation of capital, into a catastrophe for capital itself?

*The explanation for this is to be found in the domestication of humanity, which comes about when capital constitutes itself as a human community. The process starts out with the fragmentation and destruction of human beings, who are then restructured in the image of capital; people are turned into capitalist beings, and the final outcome is that capital is anthropomorphized. The rupture of the body from the mind made possible the transformation of the mind into a computer which can be programmed by the laws of capital. The domestication of humanity is closely bound up with another phenomenon which has intensified even further the passivity of human beings: capital has in effect “escaped”. Economic processes are out of control and those who are in a position to influence them now realize that in the face of this they are powerless: they have been completely outmaneuvered. At the global level, capital's escape is evident in the monetary crisis; overpopulation, pollution and the exhaustion of natural resources. The domestication of humanity and the escape of capital are concepts*

*which can explain the mentality and activity of those who claim to be revolutionaries and believe that they can intervene to hasten the onset of revolution: the fact is that they are only playing roles which are a part of the old world.”*

Where I differ from Camatte is that I accept as axiomatic the existence of an elitist syndicate/power circle of international financiers (embedded as they themselves might be in the circuitry of Capital) with the single-minded objective of converting the entire planet into a captive market that can be exploited monopolistically through their industrial and financial supremacy. Are these globalist financiers still slaves to the unrelenting reproduction of Capital? Yes, but with the implicit agenda that the rest of us (the ragamuffins) work **for them** under the guise of the “public good”. This long-standing con, devised by the monopolist consortium to gouge the larger human cattle-yard, was gloatingly set forth in the early twentieth century by Frederick C. Howe in *The Confessions of a Monopolist*, where he boasts of utilizing a covert “financial technology” (and its allied occult sciences of banking and money issuance) to control government and its business regulators and, accordingly, redesign society as a closed system of inescapable servitude for the lowly “pyramid builders”. Much to the chagrin of the Left (the befuddled, dime-a-thousand sheep who turn ineptitude into a movement), the cabal of monopoly capitalists, central bankers, bullion brokers, energy tycoons and super-corporations described by Howe are collectivists themselves and financed not only National Socialism, but numerous communist movements—including the well-documented Wall Street funding of the Bolshevik Revolution.

That they all still genuflect at the altar of an especially gruesome egregore (whose ghastly dividends are our own spent carcasses) is incontestable, but their shadowy machinations add another dimension to Camatte’s contention that Capital has completely “escaped” and is now breeding and proliferating with an almost autonomous sentience. The quotidian ceremonial enactments of production and consumption may indeed enshroud the social world with a morbid intimacy (pervading most human interactions like a malefic ether), but Capital is not quite an *artificial intelligence* and there are plenty of hidden hands still directing its larger flows and orchestrating boom or bust cycles for their own advantage. Without a doubt, the plutocracy is every bit as “spook-infected” as the *zeks* beneath them and are themselves blind servants to the accumulation compulsion, but they’ve also amassed vast financial resources that dwarf the wealth of all previous empires and civilizations combined and—secure as they are in their own monetary temples—can be expected to stick with the age-old royal formula of murderous coercion for establishing authority, securing obedience, and collecting booty, tribute, and taxes. Protection is an out-and-out necessity of opulence and luxury and, from the first Pharaohs to Donald Trump, this caste of swollen leeches has had to be protected. The whole social order favorable to their hygienic idleness and

parasitism has always required a chronic economy of war (to quell external rebellions against Capital's enclosure) and a ruthlessly-efficient enforcement apparatus to police the levels of discontent within its boundaries. This pattern was set long ago and we're not likely to see any deviation from it, as these modern-day emperors intensify their mega-project to convert the entire planet into a mammoth crematoria for their Idol (with the rest of us being mere meat stockpiled for the victory feast of Capital Triumphant)—leading to foreseeable courses of action which are demonstrably fatal (in the end, the one-sided relationship of parasitism proves lethal to both parties, for the death of the host can't help but result in the death of the parasite by which it has been killed). This is a *strategic*, not a *moral*, reflection and doesn't necessarily contradict Camatte's hypothesis, but is offered only to help sketch out the complexity of the institutional and ideological labyrinth we find ourselves entombed in.

Also missing from Camatte's otherwise cutting-edge enquiry is a vision of *individual revolt* (with all its perils and promise) that isn't dependent on mass, collective mobilizations. This is perhaps due to Camatte's continued adherence to the specious Marxist notion of *gemeinwesen* (community), which romanticizes an idyllic, prelapsarian condition of unity, or "human community", which apparently existed before the atomization and micro-segmentation of capitalism. This hazy memory of an ancient social condition, before the establishment of land ownership, is fairly widespread amongst communist mythographers, but is really just an echo of the expulsion from Eden fable and belongs to the same corpus of paradisiac narratives that flows through every other major world religion. In the following section Camatte engages in a kind-of communist "divination" to present a vision of redemption that he can't possibly back up:

*Communism is first of all union. It is not domination of nature but reconciliation, and thus regeneration of nature: human beings no longer treat nature simply as an object for their development, as a useful thing, but as a subject (not in the philosophic sense) not separate from them if only because nature is in them. The naturalization of man and the humanization of nature are realized: the dialectic of subject and object ends.*

This type of fruitless speculation borders on mysticism—the same brand of dim, bungling mysticism that mars the writings of most anarcho-primitivists (who have also grown legends around a pre-Neolithic terrestrial paradise that they then make the object of an endless, nostalgic search). When Camatte resorts to these faraway conjectural absolutisms he distracts from his real strengths as a diagnostician and sounds more like Saint Francis of Assisi! Why does a radical emancipation **from** economics have to be packaged along with an ineffable experience of undifferentiated unity? And why does Camatte assume that we all **want** our individuality and uniqueness to be dissolved in some universal pool, when capitalism (in order to operate) already forces

individuals to lose themselves in the collectivity/community, and become gears in the machine? Camatte's no dingbat, but his mystical rhapsodies on "merger" and "melting away into a boundless communal being" get even more vexatious in this passage:

*What matters is the reappropriation of *Gemeinwesen* (and past beings are part of it), which can only be done after the unification of the species, and this unification can only be conceived by grasping the aspiration, desire, passion and will for community expressed through the ages. The human being can simultaneously be a *Gemeinwesen* only if humanity lives in community. Our revolution as a project to reestablish community was necessary from the moment when ancient communities were destroyed.*

Here again, Camatte is merely pasting the imagination of posterity onto a mental mist and fails to see that the technical and institutional complex of capitalism already is the "unifying agent" he seeks. In a sidesplitting essay titled "**Why I Am Not a Communist**", the aristocratic vagabond Apio Ludd does a number on all this commie tripe about "community" by pointing out that capitalism has already adopted all the major planks of communism—but without a revolution and without ceasing to be capitalism. Here's a promotional freebie:

*In conclusion, I have some good news and some bad news for my communist friends. The good news: **communism is already here**. Capitalism is simply **market** communism. From each (worker) according to her ability, to each (capitalist) according to her need. Thus, capitalism imposes service to the common good (i.e. to the ruling elite who represent "all") on all those willing to remain slaves to a higher power. The **community** of capitalism surrounds us as a system of imposed relationships, and like all permanent communities, it feeds on the lifeblood of **individuals**, so long as those individuals succumb.*

Despite this confusion about the desirability of "unity," Camatte still delivers the goods when evaluating the Despotism of Capital as an all-embracing totality without any vigorous countervailing force to oppose it (since the despotism of capital produces a "collection of slaves of capital," rather than truly antagonistic classes), concluding that capitalism has succeeded in re-shaping humanity into tolerant hosts for its insatiable parasitism (their habits governed by what's in the shop windows they press their noses against), that the comatose working class is now nothing more than a reflection of capital (possessed by an alien consciousness and unable to supersede their commodified situation), and that any future "revolutionary movement" will really consist of a struggle between *humanity* and *capital itself*. To this end, Camatte calls for a "huge renunciation" of capital while firmly insisting that this should not be done in the name of **any** class, turning his hope instead towards the eruption of a "universal human class" against this "chain of chains". This, in itself,

is not an objectionable vision: It was always outlandish to have burdened a particular class (especially a class handicapped by its position in the bowels of the industrial reproductive process) with the eschatological fate of humanity as a whole, so Camatte's call to arms remains a cut above most, but it also underestimates the crippling domestication that Camatte himself described with such exactitude. Given the advanced degree of domestication within the human race, why hedge your bets on **quantity**?

Another downside of this "revolt of the multitude" mindset is that Camatte never discusses the solitary rebel who begins (independently) to grasp the senseless trajectory and grim absurdities of the economic routines that they spend their ordinary lives ignoring; pretending to see the same plastic doll-house world that their fellow citizens insist on seeing; trying not to think too much about the implications and pointlessness of the network of domination in which they are ensnared —until they finally (without the assistance of "community") decide to place an *insurrectionary wager* and achieve a victory over money (the tyrant that has been pushing them around their whole lives) through **illegality**. Camatte also forgets about the abandonment option, or *desertion*—that is, of all the individuals who go for broke and resourcefully withdraw their support from the planetary work machine, refusing to pay further tribute to the necrophagi in charge of this zero-sum game (this sort of resistance is generally invisible to communists, since it doesn't exist in the realms inhabited by those who would reduce things to mere measuring). I'm speaking here of the countless, *de-classified* individuals who have broken out of the complex maze of scarred neuro-structures and cultural programming, and have come to recognize that the Economy is nothing more than a bubble of film, an *apparition*, conjurer's trickwork projected over the actual landscape of exhausted slave laborers and vacuous sleepers "animated" only by the daily pursuit of Mammon. With the dissolution of their mental bonds, these *deserters* have become economically useless, unfit for service, and unwilling to be pimped out by the System, but are now, in exchange, readily available to the promptings of the Marvelous and the deregulated flow(s) of Life.

Camatte has his lacunae (and much of his inquest feels unfinished) but as a renegade thinker who seemed to operate outside the accepted Marxist orientational box (going so far as to posit communism as a revolt against civilization!), I consider his corrosive analysis of domestication **by** Capital (and how long it's been occurring) to be on target—and so, I "consume" the aspects of Camatte I find tasty and make them **my own**, finding them to be a bountiful store of theoretical weaponry aimed at understanding the formative (and now rampant) processes that I really think are in motion on this planet....

## There's Nothing You've Got I Want

“Somewhere or other, since Machiavelli, politicians have always known it: the mastery of a simulated space is at the source of power, politics is neither a territory nor a function nor a real space, but a simulated model of which the manifest actions are no more than a realized effect: a ‘blind spot’, a ‘hole in reality’, a simulacrum hidden at the heart of reality and which “reality” depends on for its entire operation.

Thus the Pope himself or the Grand Inquisitor or the great priests and theologians alone knew that God did not exist – that was their secret and their strength.

Similarly the secret of the Bank is above all others. Its initiates transmit it one to another – these priests, these theologians of figures, they alone know it and laugh in their sleeves.

But I will reveal it to you: **money does not exist.**”

—Jean Baudrillard

When I ponder the dismal state of the world I often try to anticipate the next moves our would-be Overlords are likely to make on their global chessboard, and in my opinion it will probably orbit around an international currency and a worldwide commitment to upholding and expanding the slave system of **debt**. The schema for a world-wide or international currency is of relatively modern conception and was first marketed by the father of “Keynesian Economics”, John Maynard Keynes, who proposed a single global currency and a world central bank in 1945: His one-world currency was to be called the **Bancor** (early IMF architect Harry White also formulated a less blatant and much paler version he christened the “*Unitas*”), but at the time these ideas failed to appeal to the nation-states of the world because globalism was still in its infancy. Now, however, the situation is much different and considering that the ruling class has mapped out and inventoried (with the help of satellite technology) every remaining “resource” on the planet (and are even mapping things out on a genetic and molecular level) we’re starting to see an unprecedented level of cooperation and coordination between historically warring factions. I can easily see the advantages of this from a “managerial” perspective (since in the eyes of our Economic Masters, other humans are nothing more than an asset, a piece of collateral, a commercial product with an account number that is given to us at birth) for there are now almost **7 billion** of us to manage, in a situation of speedily declining resources and even **physical space**. The process that I now see underway is the simultaneous projection of “The Economy” at all points of the globe and the policing, subjugation and extermination of all those who refuse to integrate into this total global ritual.

I think the broad-spectrum plan here is to make Debt the social covenant of this coming global feudal State, to utilize debt as an “apparatus of capture” for not only the billions of passive and active believers in “the economy”, but for the non-believers as well. What I see being constructed (and I’ve been called paranoid before) is a System of total **debt peonage**, a generalized “asset stripping” that downgrades most of the population to *monetary subjects without money*, forced to compete in the most violent and degrading fashion for the crumbs of globalization.

I’m not trying to come across like a “conspiracy theorist” here, but I think the general development I’m trying to describe is borne out by some pretty brutal situations we already see happening: like the quarter of a million Indian farmers who have committed suicide in the last 16 years—an average of one suicide **every 30 minutes**. At the root of this epidemic is the huge number of small farmers trapped in a cycle of insurmountable **debt**, leading an enormous amount to take their lives out of sheer desperation.

More than 17,500 farmers a year killed themselves in India between 2002 and 2006 alone, according to always-debatable government data; over 5,000 farmers committed suicide in 2005-2009 just in the region of Maharashtra, and at least 17,368 Indian farmers killed themselves in 2016, the worst figure for farm suicides in six years. (There’s a seriously disturbing documentary on all this called “The Dying Fields”). I normally don’t like to rely on statistics to make a point, but this abysmal, pecuniary ethnic-cleansing provides a pretty clear picture of where the Global Economy—**the Money/Slave/Debt System**—is headed and of how the expendable strata—the human “surplus” **without value**—are being systematically, acceleratedly, marginalized, removed from the drawing board, and starved to extinction (which, of course, helps solve the Global Elites burgeoning population problem).

But you know what, I could be misreading all of this. I’m no expert in geo-political matters, and it’s also equally possible that this consolidation of economic and political might isn’t going to have time to congeal and that we’re entering a cycle of Mass-Scale entropy, where the System has surpassed its own rapacious function and over-reached every conceivable limit, only to produce its own reversal and drown in its own Waste Product, its own **production excrement**. Maybe through its desperate momentum for absorbing the world capitalism is really creating the conditions for its own disappearance, but if **this** is the case then its going to take the form of a meltdown and won’t have anything to do with some “historically ordained” superior-class carrying out their prophesied role: It’ll probably be a string of cascading infrastructural failures (as we’ve seen with Fukushima, the Gulf Oil Spill and the Taum Sauk Dam in Missouri), and given the degree of our domestication and our dependency on the System, it will be **VERY** ugly.

Either way, the future looks pretty bleak to me and whether this ubiquitous, exterminist Economy continues to grow new and longer tentacles or ecologic realities finally start catching up with this whole culture, I'll be contending with it—I'm deeply affected by its existence **now** and will also be if it falls. Sadly, I have absolutely no confidence in the farcical North American anarchist “scene” (comprised as it of posers and dilettantes), and any other humans that I take on as allies in the challenging days ahead (and before my own expiration date arrives) are going to be very carefully and selectively chosen. The few anarchists I **do** trust and take seriously all live in large urban settlements and this is counter-intuitive to my instinct to position myself in an area where Big Brother has less of a presence. This is where I begin thinking in terms of “ego-nomics” or looking out for myself and my immediate relations. Obviously the “market” doesn’t care in the slightest (and never has) if I have a job, shelter, health care options, or food to eat—and if there’s a dollar to be made from my misery and desperation, then it will be made. Therefore, I accept that I’m largely on my own and strive to discover ways to creatively flourish where the infrastructure decays. My own economic survival strategy (surviving the reign of the Economy, that is) definitely involves “investing” in the acquisition of pre-industrial or primitive skills (without fetishizing them), which I see as an innately empowering step towards gaining independence from the domination of the economy—and as a part of my own egoistic insurrection. I’ve also been studying survival and resistance tactics that arose during the Great Depression, and there’s a whole hidden history there, from nation-wide food riots/ food looting to armed anti-eviction leagues (both in farming communities and in large cities) to bank robbers who took time while collecting a bank’s cash to destroy the mortgage papers of distressed farmers.

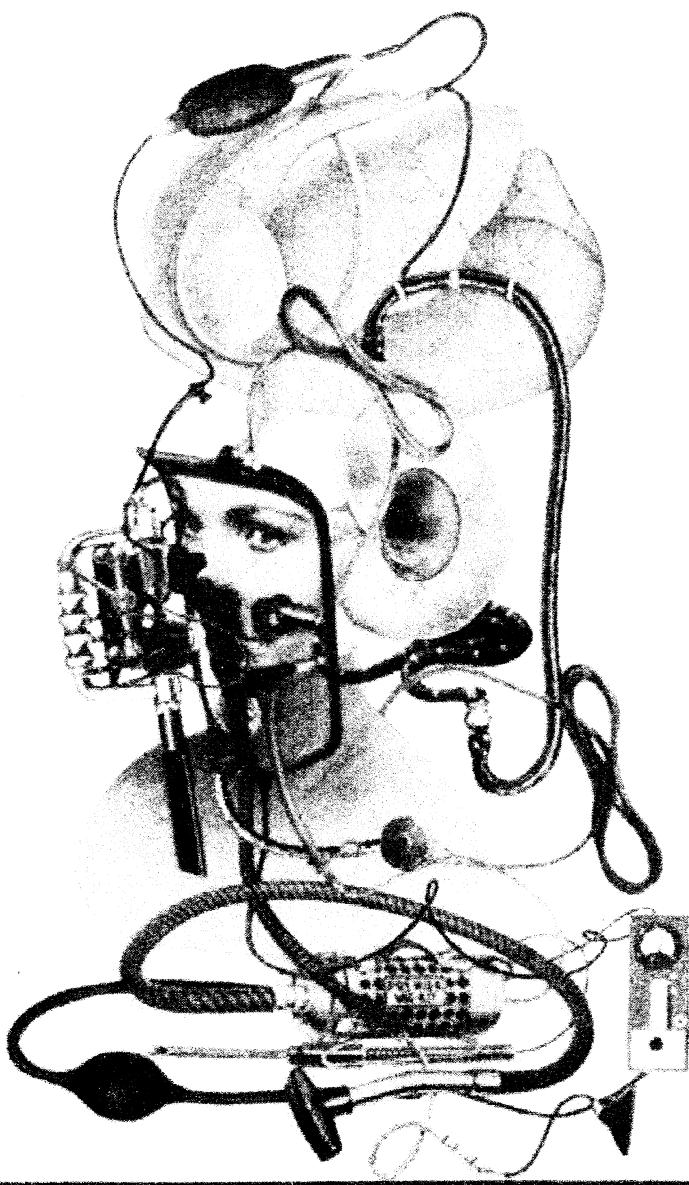
Speaking of which, I synchronistically came across an article while typing this introduction titled “Ten People Who Got Rich during the Depression” and #2 on the list was the bank robber John Dillinger, who raked in more than \$3 million in today’s dollars, followed by Charles Darrow, creator of the Monopoly board game, who became the world’s first millionaire game-designer! The remainder of the ten person list was comprised mostly of bootleggers, though #1 on the list was baseball star Babe Ruth, who made \$80,000 a year in Depression-era dollars (because no matter how bad it gets, the masses will always need their circuses and spectacles!). But it was really the close proximity of Dillinger to the creator of Monopoly on this list that triggered off some suggestive “correspondences” in my mind and energized my imagination. Dillinger (along with Pretty Boy Floyd and a host of other folk-hero expropriators) realized that he occupied a subordinate position in a hierarchical economic and political order, and so he decided to burn the established script that casts most of us as perpetual hostages in the grips of the Economy and play a new game **of his own choosing and creation.**

So perhaps it's time for anarchists to embrace the game of life, resistance and survival **as a game**. Instead of submitting to Capitalism's vicious and demeaning "let's pretend" game we can reverse engineer the money matrix that has us earmarked from birth for subjugation and slaughter, and open ourselves up to fresh, innovative modes of creative resistance. **Revolutionary Play** exists at a distance from a reality driven by practical necessities (survival under capitalism) and its activities are not subject to the laws of that reality—for on the playground, everything is possible, or at *least worth a try*. The playing through of the participation in (wild) existence, playful existence, **existence itself**, is the limitless engagement with chance, uncertainty, or what play theorist Huizinga calls "tension". Possibilities for the pure potentiality of such unshackled play evaporate in a utilitarian atmosphere, but in the multiform and mobile realm of **chance** there still exists a tiny hole in the closed system of toil and budgeting, where fortune continues to favor the bold and luck remains a free gift.

By playing my **own games** I both practice *ownness* and reclaim *ownness*. Games like this, which we author ourselves, allow us to both create our own values and pursue our own values and avoid being enslaved by Market-determined "Value"; they also—because the stakes are so high—allow no room for complacency and force us to raise our own standards—which is healthy, because passionate, uncompromising revolt might be the only standard of excellence left in this world. Most importantly, these types of games turn randomness and mischief into **very potent**, freely-available weapons...

As suggested in a CIA sabotage manual, one can blow a fuse "by putting a small coin between the light bulb and the socket". Thus, the smallest monetary denomination can mischievously be used to wreak much greater fiscal havoc. And at the moment I can't really think of a more playful or incisive metaphor for landless versus gentry, property-less versus proprietor, **anti-economic** versus **monetized** or "ragamuffin" versus monopolist...

But no matter how the future plays out, I know one thing for sure: I not only plan to go down fighting, I plan to go down **having fun...**



## Sumerian Economics

by Peter Lamborn Wilson

Public secret: everyone knows but no one speaks. Another kind of public secret: the fact is published but no one pays attention.

A cuneiform tablet called *The Sumerian King List* states that “kingship first descended from heaven in the city of Eridu,” in the south of Sumer. Mesopotamians believed Eridu the oldest city in the world, and modern archaeology confirms the myth. Eridu was founded about 5000 BC and disappeared under the sand around the time of Christ.

Eridu’s god Ea or Enki (a kind of Neptune and Hermes combined) had a ziggurat where fish were sacrificed. He owned the *ME*, the fifty-one principles of Civilization. The first king, named “Staghorn,” probably ruled as Enki’s high priest. After some centuries came the Flood, and kingship had to descend from heaven again, this time in Uruk and Ur. Gilgamesh now appears on the list. The flood actually occurred; Sir Leonard Wooley saw the thick layer of silt at Ur between two inhabited strata.

Bishop Usher once calculated according to the Bible that the world was created on October 19th 4004 BC at 9 o’clock in the morning. This makes no Darwinian sense, but provides a good date for the founding of the Sumerian state, which certainly created a new world. Abraham came from Ur of the Chaldees; Genesis owes much to the *Enuma Elish* (Mesopotamian Creation Myth). Our only text is late Babylonian but obviously based in a lost Sumerian original. Marduk the wargod of Babylon has apparently been pasted over a series of earlier figures beginning with Enki.

Before the creation of the world as we know it a family of deities held sway. Chief among them at the time, Tiamat (a typical avatar of the universal Neolithic earth goddess) described by the text as a dragon or serpent, rules a brood of monsters and dallies with her “Consort” (high priest) Kingu, an effeminate Tammuz/Adonis prototype. The youngest gods are dissatisfied with her reign; they are “noisy,” and Tiamat (the text claims) wants to destroy them because their noise disturbs her slothful slumber. In truth the young gods are simply fed up with doing all the shitwork themselves because there are no “humans” yet. The gods want Progress. They elect Marduk their king and declare war on Tiamat.

A gruesome battle ensues. Marduk triumphs. He kills Tiamat and slices her body lengthwise in two. He separates the halves with a mighty ripping heave. One half becomes sky above, the other earth below.

Then he kills Kingu and chops his body up into gobs and gobbets. The gods mix the bloody mess with mud and mold little figurines. Thus humans are created as robots for the gods. The poem ends with a triumphalist paean to Marduk, the new king of heaven.

Clearly the Neolithic is over. City-god, war-god, metal-god, vs. country-goddess, lazy goddess, garden goddess. The creation of the world equals the creation of civilization, separation, hierarchy, masters and slaves, above and below. Ziggurat and pyramid symbolizes the new shape of life.

Combining *Enuma elish* and the *King List* we get an explosive secret document about the origin of civilization not as gradual evolution towards inevitable future, but as violent coup, conspiratorial overthrow of primordial rough-egalitarian Stone Age society by a crew of black magic cult cannibals. (Human sacrifice first appears in the archaeological record at Ur III. Similar grisly phenomena in the first few Egyptian dynasties.)

About 3100 writing was invented at Uruk. Apparently you can witness the moment in the strata: one layer no writing, next layer writing. Of course writing has a prehistory (like the State). From ancient times a system of accounting had grown up based on little clay counters in the shapes of commodities (hides, jars of oil, bars of metal, etc.) Also glyptic seals had been invented with images used heraldically to designate the seals' owners. Counters and seals were pressed into slabs of wet clay and the records were held in Temple archives—probably records of debts owed to the Temple. (In the Neolithic Age the temples no doubt served as redistribution centers. In the Bronze Age they began to function as banks.)

As I picture it the invention of real writing took place within a single brilliant family of temple archivists over three or four generations, say a century. The counters were discarded and a reed stylus was used to impress signs in clay, based on the shapes of the old counters, and with further pictograms imitated from the seals. Numbering was easily compacted from rows of counters to number-signs. The real break-through came with the flash that certain pictographs could be used for their sound divorced from their meaning and recombined to “spell” other words (especially abstractions). Integrating the two systems proved cumbersome, but maybe the sly scribes considered this an advantage. Writing needed to be difficult because it was a mystery revealed by gods and a monopoly of the New Class of scribes. Aristocrats rarely learned to read and write — a matter for mere bureaucrats. But writing provided the key to state expansion by separating sound from meaning, speaker from hearer, and sight from other senses. Writing as separation both mirrors and reinforces separation as “written,” as fate. Action-at-a-distance (including

distance of time) constitutes the magic of the state, the nervous system of control. Writing both *is* and *represents* the new “Creation” ideology. It wipes out the oral tradition of the Stone Age and erases the collective memory of a time before hierarchy. In the text we have always been slaves.

By combining image and word in single memes or hieroglyphs the scribes of Uruk (and a few years later the pre-dynastic scribes of Egypt) created a magical system. According to a late syncretistic Greco-Egyptian myth, when Hermes-Toth invents writing he boasts to his father Zeus that humans never need forget anything ever again. Zeus replies, “On the contrary my son, now they’ll forget *everything*.” Zeus discerned the occult purpose of the text, the forgetfulness of the oral/aural, the false memory of the text, indeed the *lost* text. He sensed a void where others saw only a plenum of information. But this void is the *telos* of writing.

Writing begins as a method of controlling debt owed to the Temple, debt as yet another form of absence. When full-blown economic texts appear a few strata later we find ourselves already immersed in a complex economic world based on debt, interest, compound interest, debt peonage as well as outright slavery, rents, leases, private and public forms of property, long distance trade, craft monopolies, police, and even a “money-lenders bazaar.” Not money as we understand it yet, but commodity currencies (usually barley and silver), often loaned for as much as 33 1/3rd % per year. The Jubilee or periodic forgiveness of debts (as known in the Bible) already existed in Sumer, which would have otherwise collapsed under the load of debt.

Sooner or later the bank (i.e. the temple) would solve this problem by obtaining the monopoly on money. By lending at interest ten or more times its actual assets, the modern bank simultaneously creates debt and the money to pay debt. *Fiat*, “let it be.” But even in Sumer the indebtedness of the king (the state) to the temple (the bank) had already begun.

The problem with commodity currencies is that no one can have a monopoly on cows or wheat. Their materiality limits them. A cow might calve, and barley might grow, but not at rates demanded by usury. Silver doesn’t grow at all.

So, the next brilliant move, by King Croesus of Lydia (Asia Minor, 7th century BC) was the invention of the coin, a refinement of money just as the Greek alphabet (also 7th cen.) was a refinement of writing. Originally a temple token or souvenir signifying one’s “due portion” of the communal sacrifice, a lump of metal impressed with a royal or temple seal (often a sacrificial animal such as the bull), the coin begins its career with *mana*, something super-natural, something more (or less) than the weight of the metal. Stage two, coins showing two faces, one with image, the other with writing. You can never see both at once, suggesting the metaphysical slipperiness of the object, but

together they constitute a hieroglyph, a word/image expressed in metal as a single meme of value.

Coins might “really” be worth only their weight in metal but the temple says they’re worth more and the king is ready to enforce the decree. The object and its value are separated; the value floats free, the object circulates. Money works the way it works because of an absence, not a presence. In fact money largely consists of absent wealth-debt – your debt to king and temple. Moreover, free of its anchor in the messy materiality of commodity currencies, money can now compound unto eternity, far beyond mere cows and jars of beer, beyond all worldly things, even unto heaven. “Money begets money,” Ben Franklin gloated. But money is dead. Coins are inanimate objects. Then money must be the sexuality of the dead.

The whole of Greco-Egypto-Sumerian economics compacts itself neatly into the hieroglyphic text of the Yankee dollar bill, the most popular publication in the history of History. The owl of Athena, one of the earliest coin images, perches microscopically on the face of the bill in the upper left corner of the upper right shield (you’ll need a magnifying glass), and the Pyramid of Cheops is topped with the all-seeing eye of Horus or the panopticonal eye of ideology. The Washington family coat of arms (stars and stripes) combined with imperial eagle and fasces of arrows, etc.; a portrait of Washington as Masonic Grand Master; and even an admission that the bill is nothing but tender for debt, public or private. Since 1971 the bill is not even “backed” by gold, and thus has become pure textuality.

Hieroglyph as magic focus of desire deflects psyche from object to representation. It “enchains” imagination and defines consciousness. In this sense money constitutes the great triumph of writing, its proof of magic power. Image wields power over desire but no control. Control is added when the image is semanticized (or “alienated”) by logos. The *emblem* (picture plus caption) gives desire or emotion an ideological frame and thus directs its force. Hieroglyph equals picture plus word, or picture as word (“rebus”), hence hieroglyph’s power and control over both conscious and unconscious – or in other words, its magic.

## MONEY AND LOGOS

by M. D. P.

Is there a relationship between the birth of the rational mentality and the development of commercial economy? In the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E., a whole series of tightly connected social changes took place in the Ionian Greek cities of Asia Minor. It is precisely during this epoch that the rational mentality arose, at the time when maritime commercial culture began to experience its first great development.

In a short period of time, things moved from tribal social structures and ancient monarchy to the political form typical of the Greek city-states. The kinship and religious ties of the landed aristocracy gave way to new kinds of social ties in which the individual was valued above all on the basis of his property: luxury very quickly becomes a political institution. The same aristocrats who had formerly based their power on land ownership and warrior virtue began to acquire wealth first by rigging pirate ships for sea robbery and later by rigging merchant ships for commerce itself. The aristocrat started to invest his property on the sea.

A new form of domination arose, a plutocratic aristocracy that began to concentrate political power and the administration of justice in itself. The wealth that came from the land allowed it to arm merchant ships which reached the farthest ports of the Mediterranean. The usurious loan was developed to a high degree increasingly immiserating the peasant class. Class struggle developed between the peasants and the aristocrats. A third class soon intervened as an intermediary, namely, the merchant class. They were the ancient demiurges, that is to say, the first master artisans who were accustomed to taking their work from city to city, who acquired power through commerce. They were the cadets of the noble class who had been excluded from hereditary rights and therefore began to acquire wealth on the sea. In short, it was about a new wealthy class that rose with the development of maritime commerce. This new class at times sided with the aristocracy and at times with the people, increasing or moderating the class conflicts in accordance with its own interests.

The dominant regime is thus political particularism, the spirit of competition taken to the highest degree, the domination of the census and of wealth. The ruling oligarchy was forced to take an ever-increasing interest in the political events of the city. It gradually lost its nobility and superiority of descent as personal wealth increased; the importance of family and birth diminished in the face of the individual and of money. Class struggles sharpened to such

a degree, particularly in the commercially wealthiest cities, that at a certain point a new form of mediation intervened in order to annul it: legislation. Written law (*nomos*) to which citizens were subject and to which they could turn in order to demand their rights became necessary. The right is separated from politics. This is a fact of enormous historical importance that was developed to the fullest extent not so much in the Greek colonies of Asia Minor as in the western colonies of the Greater Greece. We will see that it was really here that mathematical thought developed and that the philosophical school that had Parmenides as its greatest representative arose.

The domination of the dynastic oligarchy became political domination; the aristocracy of money replaced that of birth; power was not protected by the traditions of nobility but by written laws that sanctioned the power of money. Wealth became an essential factor for having political rights and participating in the public throng. The aristocrats converted the harvests of their lands into money and assembled slaves for their mines. They gave up piracy for commerce which was more secure. Piracy was the response of the warrior aristocracy to the new merchant class. At first the aristocrats defended their privileges by fighting the sea traders, but later they found it more useful and profitable to become merchants themselves. On the other hand, the new wealthy class, who were at first despised by the nobles in the same way that a pirate chief despises the captain of a merchant ship, acquired ever-greater prestige and invested their money in land so that soon there was nothing to distinguish them from the nobles and the warriors. The aristocrats who became merchants and the merchants who became landowners are the trustees of a new form of power, the plutocratic oligarchy.

Beneath the rich nobles and the new rich, a middle class formed that enriched itself through marriage or auspicious speculation or else was forced into agricultural or manual labor through impoverishment. Below this middle class were the peasants and artisans. The former were subjected to the usury of the rich and forced to sell the products of their land at low price in order to buy manufactured objects at a high price. The latter, the urban population—consisting of artisans, tradesmen, manual laborers and mercenaries—formed an urban proletariat mainly concentrated in the markets and ports. It was not strong enough to impose its will, but was strong enough to form a troublesome element.

From the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. on, Greek history—and not just that of the Ionians of Asia—was characterized by a continuous succession of class struggles. These were precisely what led to the application of written and democratic laws which served the new rich class as a powerful weapon for combating the divine and hereditary rights of the aristocrats on the one hand and the demands of peasants and artisans on the other. The aristocrats lost the privilege of creating and interpreting the rules of social life according to

the tradition of blood. The collective responsibility of the *ghenos* and of the family gave way to that of the individual and of the citizen before the city-state. The power of tradition gave way to the power of law.

Another institution of fundamental importance arose in this period of major historical transformation. The coining of money with its value guaranteed by the state was actually invented in the 7th century B.C.E. in Asia Minor to facilitate trade between the Ionian cities and the most important cities of Lydia. The latter had already accumulated considerable wealth in trade with Mesopotamia, so much so that in that period the Lydians were considered the most capable merchants by way of land. The Ionians offered the merchants of the interior an opening to the sea. The Greeks of Asia Minor became the indispensable intermediaries in the trade with all the people who could not be reached by land. The naval power of the Ionians would rapidly increase replacing the older power of the Phoenicians.

Among the many innovations of those times, two factors in particular distinguished Greek commerce from that of the Phoenicians and were the source of its supremacy. The Greeks did not limit themselves to trading slaves or refined products like spices, jewels, precious cloth and the like by sea like the Phoenicians, but traded items of primary necessity and low cost such as oil and wine, ceramic jars, metals, fabrics and utensils, and they traded these things in great quantities. It is easy to understand how this type of commerce established completely new exchange relationships between people. Attention is not paid to the quality of the material, but to the quantity. Trade not only serves rich and powerful monarchs and aristocrats of the more "civilized" people, but the widest range of social classes. Every person whether civilized or barbarian, every individual whether of the highest or lowest rank, is a potential buyer or seller of goods according to the Greeks.

There is another substantial difference. The Phoenicians, who could be considered the most daring navigators of the time due to their navigation skills and courage, faced the sea with tiny ships and built commercial trading centers on the coasts where they stopped as bases for their most distant dealings. The founding of trading centers is a characteristic aspect of Phoenician commerce. There are only a few exceptions to this, and the most important of these is the founding of a city such as Carthage, which quite quickly became economically powerful by being able to rebel against the Phoenicians and constitute itself as an independent naval power. Unlike the Phoenicians, the Ionians of Asia Minor established a sort of sea-based commerce with an essential characteristic that is completely new: the establishment of colonies.

It is not easy to enumerate all the causes of Greek colonization, but the most important of these could be considered the scarcity of tillable topsoil that led to the search for new territories; rising overpopulation connected to the

increase in wealth; class struggle between rival factions within a single city and between cities that forced entire groups of citizens to make their exodus by sea. This last factor in particular must be taken into consideration since it is the typical expression of the establishment of new forms of social relationships, of the breakdown of ancient feudal kinship ties following the rise of a new social class of wealthy merchants, of the political and social instability that derives from it and of the political particularism of the *polis*.

## IN SEARCH OF STABILITY

The invention of money had a revolutionary effect on a whole series of planes, accelerating a social process of which it was itself one of the basic effects: the development of a maritime commercial sector within the Greek economy that even extended to products for common consumption, the creation of a new type of wealth that was radically different from landed wealth and the development of a new wealthy class whose activity was decisive in the social and political restructuring of the city. A new mentality and a new morality were born. The entire traditional conception of human excellence based on nobility of birth and warrior virtue were called into question and later destroyed by the power of money. Money became a social mark of value: it gave prestige and power. Emerging as a fitting human strategy to guarantee the ease of exchange between trading people, Money established a common denominator and a common measure between use values that are qualitatively different. The goods had to be made comparable to each other in order to be traded; they had to be made equivalent to one another through a process of abstraction that ignores the difference in order to find the uniformity, that abstract and quantitative element that is exchange value. Every commodity came to be like every other; thus one person valued another because he possessed the same amount of money. The written law confirmed the process of quantification established by the circulation of money in its process of abstraction—all citizens were equal before the law just as they were before money; all could participate in the public thing and the government of the city with powers proportional to their wealth and everyone could acquire wealth through saving, commerce and speculation, independently of family relations, ancestral religion and the customs of birth.

The process of abstraction and quantification was manifested not only in money and law, but in other areas as well: the adoption of alphabetic writing, the promulgation of a civil calendar responding to the needs of public administration, the division of the city into zones defined on the basis of criteria of administrative convenience, the birth of mathematics and philosophy and, lastly, the concept of the *polis* itself. The city was not identified with any particular group, privileged family or specific activity; it was simply the ensemble of all the citizens whose social relationships, freed from ancient personal and

familial bonds, were defined abstractly in terms of identity, interchangeability of roles, and equality before the law.

The mathematical, rational, logical mentality arose in the Ionian colonies of ancient Greece at the same time as sea-based mercantile economic structures. The quantitative and abstract aspect of mathematics was joined with the process of abstraction and quantification implicit in commodity exchange.

The social transformation that marks the transition from the ancient monarchic and feudal regime to the city-state is connected to the analogous transformations in the fields of ethical and mythico-religious thought.

The ancient religious prerogative, through which those of royal and noble birth secured their power over the masses, lost its privileged character, expanding and spreading out until it was integrated almost completely into political institutions. A knowledge formerly prohibited and reserved for a privileged few became public domain; it was discussed in the circle of brotherhoods of sages that at this point no longer imposed any restrictions of rank and origin. The opening of common discussion on topics of a general order that were previously the subject of supernatural revelation, such as the origin of the cosmic order and the explanation of natural phenomena, led to the rise of *philosophy*.

The philosopher was no longer the ancient priest, trustee of a mystery at the service of royal power, but an individual belonging to a brotherhood in which free discussion had opened; later he would argue his opinion directly in the crowded *agora*, making them subjects of public debate in which contradiction, dialectical reasoning and “proof” would have definitively gained the upper hand over supernatural revelation. The basic problem of the philosopher and the sage was the diffusion and publication of his ideas, placing them in dialectical relationship with his predecessors and successors. He had to take the potential rebuttals of his adversaries into account and was constrained to think in relationship to them. His task was to create schools of thought, teach and transmit ideas and knowledge while perpetually keeping the possibility of discussion open. Through words and writings he addressed himself to all citizens and all cities. The philosopher no longer had a homeland or traditions; rather one could say that he was a “world citizen”. He traveled from city to city to discuss his ideas, to learn different things, to counterstrike, to argue. It was much more difficult to keep track of the city of one's origin than of the “school” to which one belonged; in fact, this was one of the small elemental gestures that characterized him. As Heraclitus asserted, the philosopher had to take hold of that which is common to every human being; he had to base himself on *logos* just as the city is based on law; the only law the philosopher obeyed was the law of reason. But the Heraclitean *logos*, the normative principle of nature, started to separate from nature; the original

unity between being, becoming and norm was already damaged. The *logos* was not so much the normative natural principle as the normative human principle, that which ruled the behavior of people, their relationships among themselves and with nature. But nature was subjected to a law that it did not itself create, that was no longer immanent in it, a law that was imitated in the social order of the city-state that imposed its rules of conduct in all relationships of a person with himself, with other people and with nature; just as money, universal exchange value for all goods, imposed its law on the goods themselves and ruled the relations of people with each other in the realm of commercial exchange.

The same basic needs were also found in poetry before and during the time philosophy developed, starting with Homer. The sense of the transience and inconstancy of life and human destiny, the discomfort and restlessness of those who experienced a world turned upside-down and in continual transformation, appeared frequently in the poetry of this period, expressed in a very lively way. In the midst of such instability in life, the Ionian felt the urgent need to catch hold of anything firm and stable, the necessity of conceiving a unitary principle and permanent law of change. Therefore, he turned to the abstract concepts of *Fate*, *Necessity*, and *Justice*, that served him as an anchor. These ethical concepts arose in the sphere of social life in response to the harsh struggles of cities, parties and classes and came to constitute not only the channel between the social sphere and the individual, but also between this and the surrounding natural world. And since long and dangerous sea voyages increased the awareness of the changeability and instability of all natural things even more, the problem of the search for stability and permanence acquired a cosmic dimension; in other words, it became a philosophical problem. Speculation on the natural world, aimed at the search for a unitary law applicable to every transformation, found a basic point of reference in the earlier ethical conception and in the abstract concepts of *Necessity* and *Justice*. In the Ionian philosophies of the 7th century B.C.E. and consequently in Heraclitus, Parmenides, Empedocles and Democritus, the concepts of *Fate*, *Necessity* and *Justice* established the permanent, unitary principle of a universal and eternal law in the multiple varieties of phenomena. The word *cosmos* itself was derived from the military-political field, referring to an ordered arrangement. It would give birth to the term cosmology and reflected the mental sphere of philosophy.

The notion of a universal and stable law that rules human life first appeared in Greece in the Ionian epic poetry of the Homeric narratives. This notion was connected with the transition from a more ancient form of morality exalting the violent passions and warrior courage typical of the aristocracy to the more recent one in which courage and force were considered dangerous passions and surrendered their place to prudence and intelligence. The

morality of the merchant replaced that of the warrior; the violence of reason and language replaced that of physical force, the calculated risk of the shrewd trader replaced the manifest risk of the noble warrior. Thus, a completely new mentality and ethic arose.

## FATE, NECESSITY, JUSTICE

Though always understood as the supreme regulator of all natural and human events, Fate was interpreted in two substantially different ways within the sphere of Ionian thinking. Sometimes it appeared as a dark mysterious force that blindly distributed the good and the bad among people. At other times, it appeared as a normative law, a rational and ethical principle of conduct that a person had to follow so as not to provoke punitive sanctions through the violation of a prescribed order. The first conception recalls the blind natural forces to which the seafarer was subjected and the uncontrolled, destructive forces liberated in the first bloody class struggles that marked the advent of a new society. In the lyric and tragic poetry of the more ancient era, the clear awareness of the misery of the human being who was subjected to a power that was greater than her and that he was utterly unable to control appeared continually. Thus, the original moral precepts of moderation arose. These did not so much draw attention to a need for measure and proportion as is frequently claimed, as to the awareness of the limited and dependent conditions of the human being of the time. But later, when the first written laws arose with the aim of annulling social differences and affirming the abstract power of money, the ancient decrees of *Fate* were definitively transformed into norms of moral conduct, a need for order and justice the violation of which inevitably led to sanctions aimed at restoring its validity. From this time on, it was no longer the blind violence of nature, but rather the human passions that were considered the original source of the violation of the law of order and justice. Rebellion against the law of Fate could be considered reckless and still rouse a sense of secret admiration; rebellion against the norms of justice was simply considered pride and foolish arrogance and was punished as such. Only at this point did the transition to the new ethical perspective of mercantile society in which control of the passions, prudence, the use of reason and the insidious hidden violence of laws and norms of social conduct gain the upper hand over the open expression of desires, over violent emotion, over the force of arms and over recklessness seem fully evident. At this point, the power of the abstract value of exchange over ancient ties and social relationships was clearly manifested.

In the same way, the principle of *Necessity*, which corresponded to the primitive social situation in which the individual was completely at the mercy of great political upheavals and natural forces that the seafaring merchant was forced to face on the sea in extremely precarious conditions (leading to

nostalgia for a more stable world and, thus, to reaction in the face of new historical events), gradually gave way to the principle of *Justice*. This occurred when a new social order began to be built, when instability and uncertainty began to give way to stability and permanence, in other words, when a balance based on the common denominator of exchange value was established between the old and new social classes in struggle, a balance which accepted the power of money as law and established individual worth on the basis of wealth. But the new social stability was achieved abstractly through the promulgation of written law and the quantification and rationalization of all civic life. Even though social organization in general was subject to an abundance of stable laws, perpetual unending/becoming, the game of changing fortunes and circumstances in which nothing is truly fixed or stable, ruled in the realm of concrete daily life. Only in the realm of the administration of justice and power did the abstract principle of permanence and immutability appear, that principle according to which the social world seems to be ruled by a single, inflexible law, the law of profit. This social situation found its correspondence in philosophy. From the 8th through the 6th century B.C.E., attention began to focus on permanence and on the laws of necessity, measurement and justice; the need to bring the multiple back to the unitary, becoming to being, became increasingly urgent. But no longer in the form of an inclusive, organic conception of nature according to which **being** is devoid of reality unless it is the principle of becoming and becoming is not acceptable if it cannot be traced back to being, but rather at first in the realm of a dialectical conception that relates being to becoming in the endeavor of a reciprocal justification and tries to bring the multiple back to the unitary, and later in the realm of being itself that, after denying the reality of all becoming, can only relate to itself. This evolution of philosophical thought can be easily followed, because it retraced the paths of the evolution of commercial capital.

## DECEPTION AND PERSUASION

The merchant exchanged goods in order to make money. In doing so, he gave up the violence of arms to make use of a more subtle and refined method, the violence of language. The merchant gave up the spoils of war, easy to acquire but short-lived, for a more lasting profit even though it was more difficult to conquer. He gave up the Dionysian activities of pillage and war for the Apollonian activity of commerce. While warrior people got the upper hand through the immediate violence of their strength, merchant people were too weak and cowardly and had to have recourse to cunning in order to survive. So they renounced the risk of adventure, put off their greed for a time, shunned open violence in order to take advantage of the hidden violence of cunning.

Cunning is the art of deceptive persuasion, and the art of deceptive persuasion is diplomacy. A superiority of language is needed; one has to be coherent in order to persuade with reasoning; one needs to *explain*, that is to say, to make it *plain*, through language, that things cannot possibly be different from what one wants them to be. Explanation is the act of convincing violently with language; it is persuasion through which one can *convince oneself* of the truth of an argument; it is the facility for *convincing oneself*. To explain is thus to persuade the opposing party that the behavior one is trying to secure is advantageous to them. The merchant must persuade in order to sell his goods at a profit, and in order to accomplish this he must play on the desire of the eventual buyers. He must swindle through persuasion. The art of persuasive deception is typical of the merchant.

The powers of thought and language over reality are guaranteed only by the separation between language and reality; but power over reality can only mean taking possession of it. There is a paradox in the fact that this power, which is only guaranteed by separation, must at the same time be a possession. This leads to an endless process in which language and thought continually try to take possession of reality, while continually reestablishing their distance from it. This is appropriate for the activity of expressing themselves as the thought and language of alienated power. The absurdity is the will to take possession of reality in the moment and in the very act in which separation from it is established.

### **“EARNING” REALITY**

In order to better understand the relationship between the development of Greek philosophy and the parallel development of the commercial economy, it is useful to compare the conception of nature held by the earlier Ionian philosophers with the philosophical speculations of Parmenides in order to understand the substantial difference between them.

When the Ionian philosophers spoke of natural reality, they used the word *ta onta*, which means the things that exist, because they perceived reality in its concrete multiplicity. However it may have been interpreted, the essence of the world showed itself to them under the visible form of a plurality of things, rich in all their qualities. Being appeared as singular for the first time in Parmenides and was designated by the term *ta on* which meant that which is. The essence of the world was no longer a variegated plurality of qualities, but rather one single abstract and general quality. The change of language revealed the advent of a new conception of reality. It was no longer made up of the multiple things gathered from sensory experience or speculative reflection, but was the intelligible object of rational reflection (the *logos*) that was expressed through a language that, critically reflecting on itself, found its basic requirement in the principle of non-contradiction.

The Being of Parmenides is *One*, identical to itself; it cannot be other than itself, but can only grow into itself. The Being of Parmenides is intelligible, the object of *logos*, that is to say of reason. It is the object of rational language. Or rather, it is formed in the sphere of this rational language that is common to all human beings, the general abstract element of their reciprocal relations of communication. However, the Being of Parmenides is not immediately visible in reality. It must be acquired through a difficult conquest: the investigation of the philosopher. The essence of reality must be “earned”.

The connection between the Being of Parmenides and exchange value in the form of money, a pure abstraction that is identical to itself, should be evident. Money is accumulated in order to buy goods in one place and resell them in another with the aim of getting money. But the exchange of money with money seems absurd, since exchanging things which are identical to each other makes no sense. The sense in this process actually comes from the fact that money is not exchanged for an equal amount of money, but for a greater amount, thus increasing its value. This happens because the goods are bought at a low price so that they can be sold at a higher price. Thus money can be exchanged with itself; it can represent the unchangeable being that has reason to exist only in itself. At this point, reality becomes *One* in the qualitative sense. Its only quality is “exchangeability”, exchange value.

“The doctrine of Parmenides marks the moment in which the contradiction between the becoming of the sensory world, this Ionian world of the *physis* and the *genesis*, and the logical requirements of thought are proclaimed,” Vernant states. In other words, it marks the moment in which the contradiction between the differing qualities of goods and the single quality of money is set forth. This single quality is known as exchange value, interchangeability, that which all things have in common, that which is the essence of all things, that which makes all things comparable, that which places them in relation, that which constitutes their *ratio*, their rational, intelligible, logical aspect. Vernant goes on: “After Parmenides the task of philosophy would be that of restoring the link between the rational universe of discourse and the sensory world of nature through more subtly shaded definitions of the principle of non-contradiction.” In Parmenides this link—that is to say, the link between the exchange value of things and the things themselves—is destroyed. The exchange value of things replaces them, representing them in the same way as the rational world of discourse represents the sensory world of nature.

Greek reason is commercial reason. Commerce can take place only in terms of linguistic fraud, and this language is built on deception. This language must persuade, must offer evidence for persuasion, must explain. This language, like the Being of Parmenides, must find its own verification in itself.

# THE PRICE OF AN ENTIRE WORLD

by Massimo Passamani

Every day, this society of hierarchy and money produces violence and, at the same time, a fixed system of moral anesthesia with which to support it. The capacity to perceive it has become an endeavor as well as a necessary condition of rebellion. Daily relations are a huge, complex game of disguising the brutality.

The first rule is to fragment the activities of individuals in such a way that it is impossible to perceive them in their unity. What would the worker think if he had the totality of causes and effects of his small repetitive gestures before his eyes all at once? The machines that she operates produce exploitation, poverty, pain, death. But only with an effort can one link the starving children in Africa that one saw on television with the raw materials that one uses and the products that one manufactures. Remaining focused on tiny push-buttons is an anesthetizing of awareness. The little bureaucrat who fills out forms for eight hours a day does not see the immigrant that he will deport when he is at home, because her name on that form is not there. He doesn't see who will end up in prison because she didn't agree with stamped papers. He has never locked the prison door on anyone, not him.

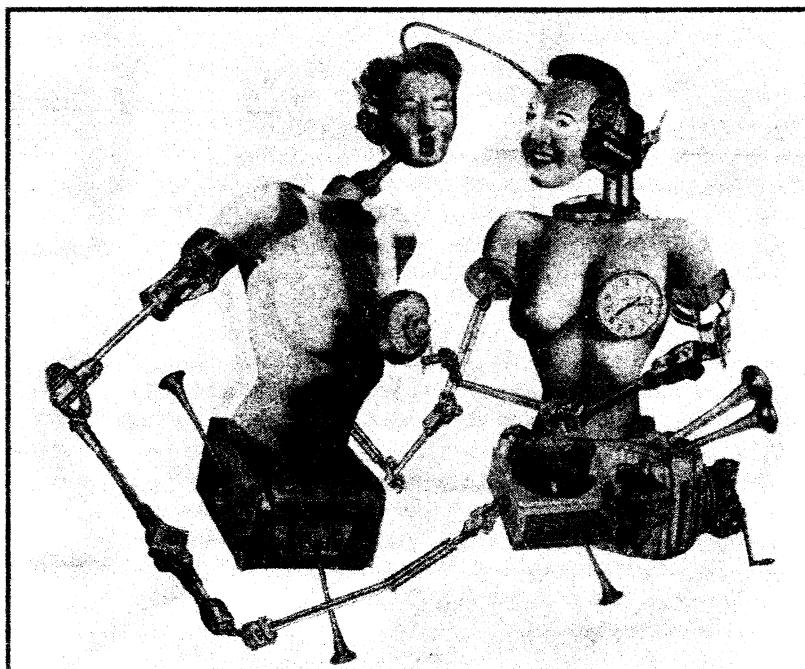
Passive contemplation toward a work activity that one goes through in complete unawareness is the same as that which chains one to the screen. The television viewer comes directly out of the factory or the office. She complains about her job just as he complains about the politician on TV. But if, while the latter spoke, one could see the people crushed by laws, killed by asbestos, bombed, mangled by barbed wire and tortured in any police station, if one could collect the blood, the suffering behind the politician's trashy smile, what would happen?

The only violence that is perceived is that which is reported. The mafia kills for money. The citizen is indignant, and the more indignant she is, the more innocent she feels when she uses money (the great mafia). The terrorist puts bombs on trains. The citizen is indignant, and the more indignant he is the more he feels at home when he goes to vote (for the great terrorists). So many people, who earn money every day, take it to the bank and make their purchase at the supermarket, have never held a weapon, or made a threat, or wounded, or killed. They work in insurance, at the post office, at the custom-house or wherever; they are peaceful and love neither blood nor bullying. Clever people. They have never wanted to see violence, therefore they have never seen it.

The economy, in its abstractness, appears to move by itself. This is why money seems harmless. One doesn't see the violence among banknotes, thus it is not there. But one tries to reach out and grasp a product without giving its corresponding exchange value, its socially established value, its general equivalent, in short, money, in return. Suddenly, here is society recovering its claim from its pieces in the face of violated property. The capitalist, the judge, the police, the jailer, the journalist, the priest and the psychologist will come to its defense. They will tell you that the value of a thing is not your enjoyment, your activity or your need, but rather a mysterious social measure that grants a product to you only if you also accept its long train of flatterers, only if you accept the capitalist, the judge, etc. They will come to teach you the value of work and the habit of seeing in things the time that must be stolen from you in order to have them - that is the money - and thus of making things sacred, of serving them, of measuring your value in relation to them and not the other way around. They will come to remind you that the respect for property is love for the human person, that if you think otherwise, you have mental or family problems, that maybe you are seeking the affection of your parents in theft, however you may have been helped, raised, educated, connected. They will come to try you, to imprison you. Or if you defend yourself, they will come to beat you, to shoot you, to kill you. Whenever anyone disrupts the habitual circulation of money, it is here, beneath the simulation, that the true face of the market appears: violence. "Stealing, robbing, how is it possible?" the citizen thinks, focused on her tiny push-button, on his files or on the television screen in front of him. Why illegal activity instead of work? Perhaps because by stretching out one's hand directly for money, one snatches time - life - from the organization of the economy. One takes the possibility for doing as one pleases, for dreaming, for discussing, for loving, for creating one's projects from the dead time of work. Less time for work, more time for destroying it. Money is time. One certainly does not escape exploitation and the commodity system by attacking property (to think this is once again to focus on one's own pointing finger, thus, yet another ethical anesthetic). What one obtains, having the strength for it, is a few additional possibilities. Things, no longer measured with the yardstick of money (that is, of the extorted activity of sacrifice), lend themselves better to experimentation, to the gift, to use, to destruction. Work no longer appears only as the wage (the first of its chains), but as social organization, as an ensemble of relationships. Escaping the wage system - in the narrow sense - provides one with an additional tool (provided that one does not allow oneself to be enslaved by the money, by the role of robber, by specialization) in the struggle against the economy. But this struggle is either widespread or it is nothing. Only when looting becomes an extensive practice, when the gift arms itself against exchange value, when relationships are no longer mediated by commodities and individuals give *their own* value to things, only then does the destruction of the market and of money - that is all one with the demolition of the state and of every hierarchy - become a real possibility.

But when the authorities catch a glimpse of all these aspirations behind a robbery, they raise the price. If those who commit the robbery are anarchist individuals, the price goes up to the risk of shooting or being killed, up to the risk of losing the time one wanted to snatch from work in prison, up to all the additional time the magistrates have planned for them with the additional charge of "armed band". The punishment increases. There is a theorem prepared for any comrade who individually decides to solve his money problem by committing a robbery, that would lock him up, even before he is put in jail, in a secret structure with leaders, treasurers and bookkeepers. Thus, the state presents an increasingly spiced-up account and tries to create an odious collective responsibility in order to turn us into the controllers of each other. Once again, illegal violence is reported to cover up the daily, legal violence. Where an anarchist is involved, the train of the flatterers of money is even longer. The wares are even more costly, because what is in question is the very existence of capitalists, judges, police, jailers, journalists, priests, psychologists, bureaucrats, workers and robbers.

The surplus of repression is defending a whole world of prices. No price should seem too high.



# Counterfeiting Sovereignty

## Why the State jealously guards its currency

by Don LaCoss

*“Counterfeit coin is said to prove the existence of genuine—the terms being purely relative. But because there can be no counterfeit where there is no original, does it in any manner follow that any undemonstrated original exists? In seeing a spurious coin, we know it to be such by comparison with coins admitted to be genuine; but were no coin admitted to be genuine, how should we establish the counterfeit, and what right should we have to talk of counterfeits at all?”*

—Edgar Allan Poe (1850)

Of all the symbols that clutter up our thinking on a daily basis, few are as deliriously supernatural as paper money. In literature, it's called “suspension of disbelief”: the reader concedes to go along with a book's version of reality and accept some sets of imaginary aesthetic perspectives as legitimate markers for what's going on in exchange for the sensations of entertainment.

When the State prints up another batch of ugly, garishly-colored paper decorated with pictures of dead nationalist celebrities, we as subjects of that authority collectively suspend our disbelief and willingly comply to accept it as an abstract representation of condensed achieved work (yours or someone else's) and of the promise that the surrounding economic order will continue to acknowledge some value to that work in the payment of debt. The secret to a strong, stable, capitalist economy is to get everyone involved to come to an agreement about what version of social reality is represented by these poorly-designed rectangular pieces of colored cotton and linen.

The hallucinatory nature of bank notes sometimes crops up in the study of the philosophy of money. To capture its mirage-like qualities, theorists like Georg Simmel, Berthold Otto, and Elias Canetti sometimes dipped into the realms of human experience usually explored by the most fanciful theologians, cosmologists, or psychologists: money is best understood as interpersonal communication, they suggest, or as human intention and desire, or as a mirror of modernity and identity. But it is clear that irrationality is a core component of money, and that all the high-tech inks, raised intaglio printing presses, and ultraviolet security threads used by the United States Bureau of Engraving and Printing to produce cash would be useless without consensual mass delusion and widespread magical thinking.

Marx diagnosed this magical thinking as a symptom of alienation, and he famously blamed money for the poisonously immoral abstraction and

objectification of social relations. “My own power is only as great as the power of my money,” he wrote in his Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844. “I am a detestable, dishonorable, unscrupulous, and stupid man, but since money is honored, then so is its possessor.” Money has the “power to confuse and invert all human and natural qualities. It is the alienated power of humanity.”

What Marx didn’t follow up on, though, is that, for all its alienating qualities, money can also be used to fuse people together into a very tightly bound (and highly irrational) community, like the State. After all, it’s no coincidence that one of the things that historians look at in the study of ancient civilizations is when and how money was standardized by a central power. Uniform currency is as predictable an infrastructural management mechanism in a society as the standardization of weights and measures in commerce.

## Counterfeit nation

Stephen Mihm’s *A Nation of Counterfeitors: Capitalists, Con Men, and the Making of the United States* (2007) offers a bit of insight here on the subject of currency, state authority, and counterfeiting. Between the end of the American Revolutionary War and the outbreak of the Civil War, hundreds of privately-owned chartered banks in over 30 states produced their own versions of currency against gold reserves; Mihm guesses that there were about 10,000 different kinds of paper money floating around, making it extremely difficult for anyone to make distinctions between legitimate and counterfeit cash (or counterfeit banks, for that matter).

Most of those notes had an identifiable regional association—the “First Metropolitan Bank of Philadelphia,” let’s say—so that when you used them in purchasing goods and services, you reinforced local ties and helped to forge a discrete territorial identity. Because it was impossible to recognize the real thing with so many different banks producing their own in-house paper, counterfeit money was accepted (and in some cases, welcomed) in trade and commerce out of necessity.

In making merchants, bankers, and other debt-holders in the community knowingly complicit in making a counterfeit bill into “a generally accepted medium of exchange,” fake money was magically converted into real money. The epigraph at the top of this article by the horror writer Edgar Allan Poe was originally published during this chaotic age of wildcat banks, currency swindlers, and the ghostly appearance and disappearance of monetary value.

This all came to an end with the need for the federal government to assert its sovereignty over the rebel Confederate South during and after the Civil War. To aid in this mission, a single national currency was created that would

subsume all local bank notes and regional economic activity to a more centralized body. The use of this national bank note as the one and only money was enforced; the Secret Service was invented in 1865 to suppress the production of competing currencies for the Department of the Treasury. This move sharply changed the way the market economy operated in the US and helped to stabilize the country in time for the coming burst of industrialization at the end of the nineteenth century.

Although Mihm doesn't spell it out this way, it's clear from his history that currency is a con game, and counterfeit bills effectively challenge paper money to prove its worth. The only way that official currency can neutralize the challenge of counterfeits is to call upon the State's monopoly on violence to criminalize and punish alternative currencies.

The exclusive use of state-issued money allows political authorities to insinuate themselves into daily person-to-person dealings at a remarkably intimate level. It gives the State a considerable degree of control over all kinds of social and cultural practices. Every piece of government-issued money in your pocket embroils you into a vast authoritarian network of national sovereignty mechanisms.

### **Treason and war**

National currency is undoubtedly a tool of State authority. It is a weapon of the State and it is a tool of state building—it's no wonder that government bureaucrats want to jealously control its creation, circulation, and quantity. The government declares cash valuable and backs this up by forcing people to use it for all economic activity. In so doing, the sovereign power closely ties the fortunes of its subjects to its own stability; any attempts to destabilize the legitimacy of government rule over individual lives will result in a loss of confidence in the economy, potentially impoverishing those living under its order.

Does this mean that counterfeiters are seditious? Can making and passing counterfeit money be regarded as anti-statist subversion? The legal penalties are certainly harsh enough to suggest that counterfeiting is a minor form of treason: in US federal court, for example, there are separate felony penalties for making, possessing, passing, and concealing “forged and counterfeited obligations of the United States knowingly and with intent to defraud,” each charge carrying with it about fifteen years in prison and a fine of \$5,000. On top of that, every counterfeit bill passed is an additional \$250,000 penalty aside from the cost of restitution for whatever good or service that you purchased with your creation.

As with the draconian drug laws, property seizures by the government are common. Theoretically, if you make a \$10 bill in your bedroom with a

computer, a flatbed scanner, a decent desktop image editing software program, and a good color printer, and then use that DIY sawbuck to put gas in your car, law enforcement agencies are able to seize your computer equipment, your home, and your car. On top of that, you'd be looking at 60 years in a federal prison, probably \$270,000 in fines, and you'd be forced to reimburse the gas station for the couple gallons that you bought with the \$10.

Congruent with notion that counterfeiting is a treasonous erosion of sovereignty is the position that state-sponsored funny money operations are considered acts of war. Overlooking the mass irrationality that's needed to make money work in the first place, international law uses sound, sober economic reasoning for regarding counterfeiting as a legitimate *casus belli*.

Bogus currency increases the amount of cash circulating in the carefully-monitored money supply, and any unauthorized increase in the money supply devalues it, weakening its value.

This helps to explain why, starting in 2002, there were statements being made regularly by US government spokes-puppets about Saddam Hussein's connections to a massive counterfeiting operation that was threatening the integrity of the US dollar. (As with Saddam's sophisticated biological warfare and nuclear weapons program, evidence of his sinister international currency counterfeiting scheme was never found in Iraq.)

US executive branch fingers have also been pointing at the vile Stalinist ruling elite of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as counterfeitors, but an extensive investigation by Interpol in 2006 and by the Swiss state police last summer failed to confirm any involvement whatsoever of Pyongyang in the manufacture of spurious US bank notes. As the Bush-Cheney regime tried to go out with a bang in January 2009, Iran was singled out as the mastermind behind yet another economic warfare campaign based on counterfeit dough.

The frothy blather that's been most promulgated by right-wing bloggers and the Pavlovian mainstream press has been about a suspected Syria-Hezbollah-Palestine Authority dollar factory supposedly run by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard in the Beqaa valley in eastern Lebanon—expect more of the same stories as the propaganda mills begin churning out more nonsense for justifying airstrikes against Iran.

## The superdollar conspiracies

What these Axis of Evil counterfeiting conspiracy theories have in common is the creation and distribution of what US Treasury experts have taken to calling "superdollars." The superdollar is almost indistinguishable from the real thing—what makes it "super" is the superior quality of the inks, etchings,

and printing on these bills which exceed, by most accounts, the look and design of the cash minted by the US government.

These fakes are exquisitely advanced. Because of the artistry and technology that they entail, it can only be the work of a government rather than an organized crime syndicate. It's been estimated that every one out of ten thousand US bills currently in circulation is a superdollar counterfeit. In the next few months, the Treasury Department will be releasing its "big-head" facelift of the \$100 note, a re-invention of the 2003 design that's been largely motivated, by the advances in counterfeiting technology that has made the superdollar possible.

The panic over these counterfeits is existential. It is virtually impossible to distinguish between an "un-real" superdollar Benjamin and a "real" \$100 bill. It's not that there's a possibility that there might be some confusion between a worthless fake paper scrap and a valuable financial instrument that poses the most danger here; rather, the peril is that they are in reality both worth the same amount because they are so closely identical.

It takes the specialist skills of a forensic scientist from the Treasury Department to identify a superdollar by sight, so it is safe to assume that, for everyday transactions with one another in the street, it is an authentic, state-sanctioned bank note worth what the number in the corner of the bill says. The superdollar, then, is not an anti-\$100 bill, but a counter-\$100 bill that, for all intents and purposes, shares the identical qualities and functions of a C-note that has been issued by the US government.

When Interpol and the Swiss police failed to find any evidence of alleged North Korean involvement in the superdollar scheme, a business reporter for a conservative daily German national newspaper conducted his own investigation. Known for his expertise in the problems of government-run bank note printing industries, this German journalist concluded that the superdollars were likely the result of "an illegal parallel print of a genuine note," meaning that someone is using the exact same presses, processes, ink, paper, and perhaps even printing facilities used exclusively by the US government.

Other reporters who have followed this story have theorized that the counterfeiters are connected with US intelligence services and are producing cash for clandestine use to elude any Congressional audit and budgetary oversight. The \$100 super-dollar bills initially surface outside of the US in places where intelligence agencies are particularly active (the Middle East, East Africa, and Pacific Asia) before making their way to Europe and the US. What is especially peculiar is that—though these forgeries are astonishingly detailed to an almost microscopic level—the same unknown counterfeiters have failed to duplicate even the most basic magnetic and infrared security features. What this means is that the most common devices used by US banks can easily spot them as fake.

In other words, it's as if the superdollar counterfeiters wanted to fool everyone except the US Federal Reserve banking system, thereby limiting the usefulness of these notes to cash-only transactions conducted on foreign soil. The superdollar counterfeiting gang has been thoughtful enough to fabricate bank notes that function exactly like US money does without tampering with the Fed's carefully calculated money supply. The superdollar is a brilliant enough counterfeit to have all the power and prestige of US currency for conducting business (especially black market business) in the world's hotspots, but isn't good enough to affect the rate of monetary inflation, because the moment it enters into the US domestic money stream it is identified as a fraud and removed from circulation. It's as if the counterfeiters were US patriots, or had some sort of vested interest in keeping the stability, strength, and integrity of US state sovereignty intact.

Gold bugs—true believers in bullion as the only “real” marker of wealth, like those angry and apocalyptically anxious white guys who mix old-school right-wing survivalism with the property fetishism of the pseudo-libertarian “Libertarian Party”—mockingly refer to folding money as “fiat currency,” inked paper devoid of any intrinsic, material worth outside of the government’s ability to coerce people to use it as a legal tender in the payment of taxes.

They’ve got a point, of course—all paper money is valueless so long as value is determined by government fiat. It’s easy to extrapolate this point about fiat money for anarchists. Just as there are no legitimate governments, there is no currency that isn’t counterfeit. If the suspicions about the origins and functions of superdollars turn out to be true, then there can be no better illustration of the delusions of money and the State that we all labor under.

## Property and the Unique One

"The property of the Unique One is of a totally different sort to the social and material property on which so many theories have flowered and all of the revolutionary projects have failed. If, during my walks, I find a tree that I encounter beautiful, it belongs to me, without for all that belonging to me materially and therefore juridically. It **belongs to me** because I am the one who can at that moment appreciate all its beauty, and because it arouses a unique emotion in me that has no social meaning. If you encounter the same tree at some other moment and are moved while looking at it, it belongs to you at that precise instant, and yet it is not common to both of us—your relationship with it is just as unique. Neither of us need to possess it materially to enjoy it.

In the same way, if I appreciate the façade of the pretty 17th century house situated on the Ile Saint-Louis in Paris, it matters little to me that its legal owner is someone else; it belongs to me through my eyes and my imagining of its interior, which I undoubtedly will never see. And it pleases me that this house is there, always there, when I loiter on the banks of the Seine. The calamity for me would be for it to disappear, replaced by some anonymous block of concrete, not that its material and legal owner is a bourgeois who has the money that I lack. And if I dream of possessing it more fully, it is never a dream of social conquest.

If this text interests you, or it simply makes you think, or if you reproduce and publish it, it **belongs** to you without ceasing to be mine for all that, but it does not **belong** to the indifferent or hostile reader who has not taken any pleasure in it."

--from *The Unique One or Zombie?*







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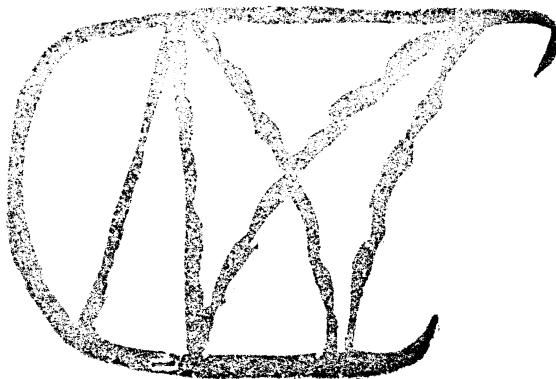
**Workers of The World, Ignite!**  
**You have nothing to lose but your minds!**

*"The most crudely false aspect of Marx's theory resides in his so-called critique of economics where, in the guise of a critic, he incessantly upholds the viewpoint of economics itself. Economics is only a theory of the world. It is the dominant theory of the world today and today only, since it is this world that created it expressly for that purpose. Economics, being a lie about the true nature of the world, like any self-respecting lie, is first a lie about its own lying nature. Like religion, economics is a total phantasmagoria, but without any of religions revelatory aspects. It is purely a damper."*

*The real project of surmounting the economy is none other than that of overthrowing a chimera. And this requires nothing other than to overthrow it in thought, because this is where chimeras live. If the economy is the central part of anything, it is only the central part of dominant thought, the central part of the dominant lie. Refuting a lie is to reveal what the lie aims to conceal and what, in a certain way, the lie itself reveals through the very care it takes to conceal it."*

—Jean-Pierre Voyer

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